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Number 81

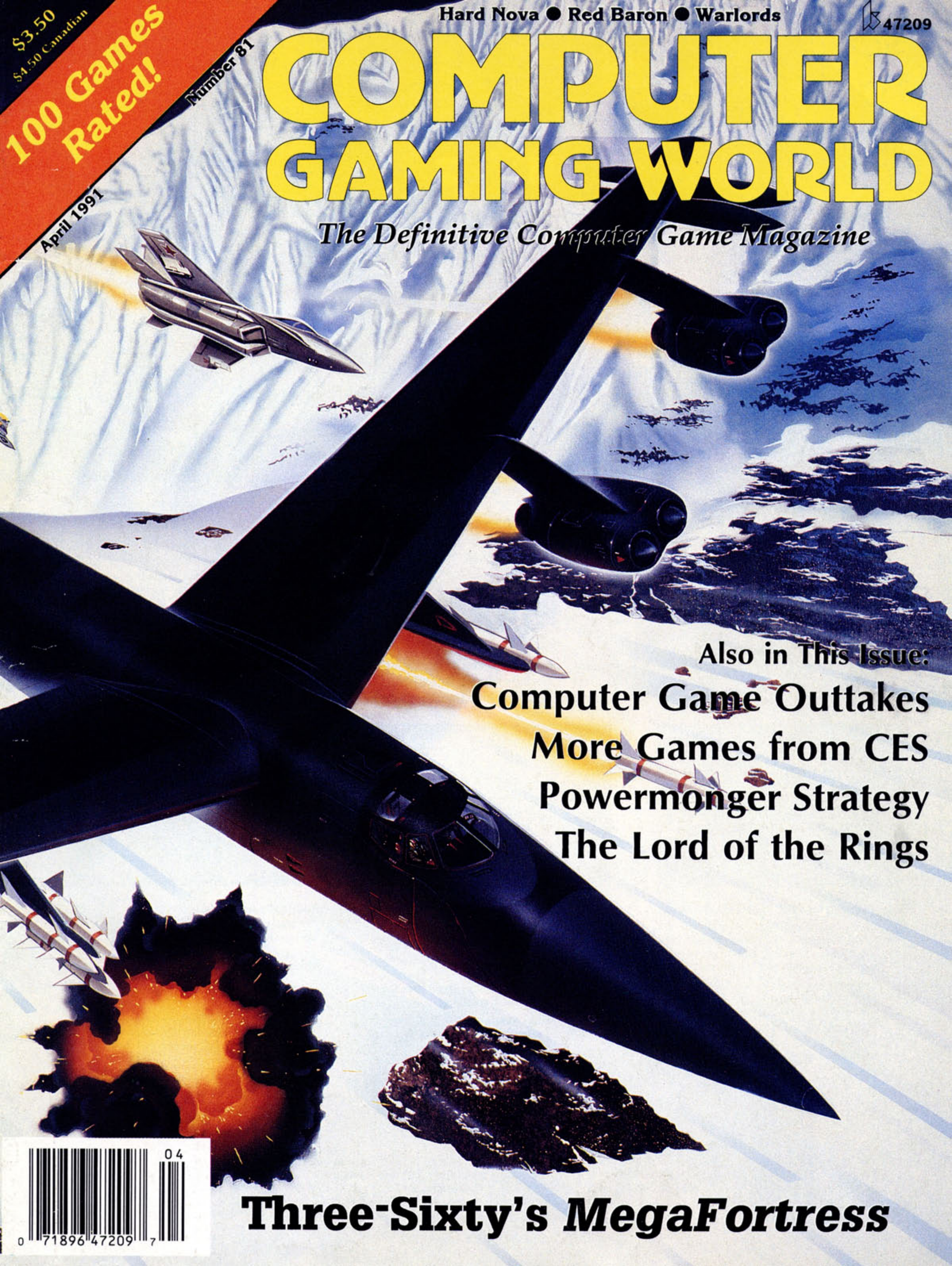
April 1991

Hard Nova ● Red Baron ● Warlords

47209

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



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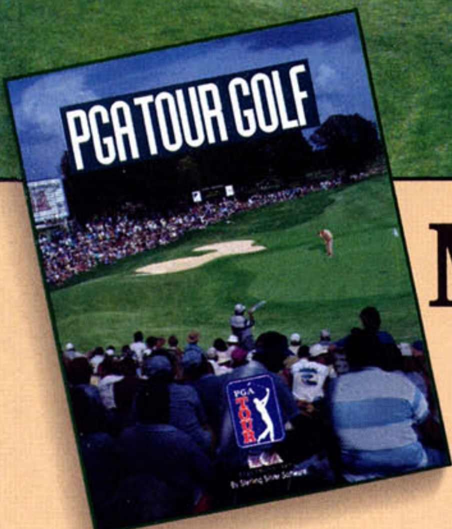
The Lord of the Rings

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Circle Reader Service #25

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games for Ten Years

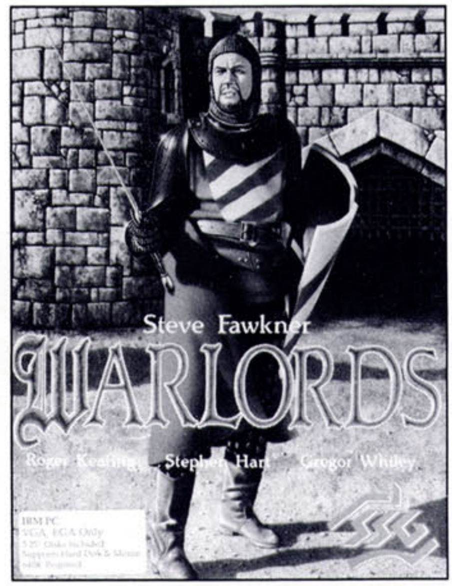
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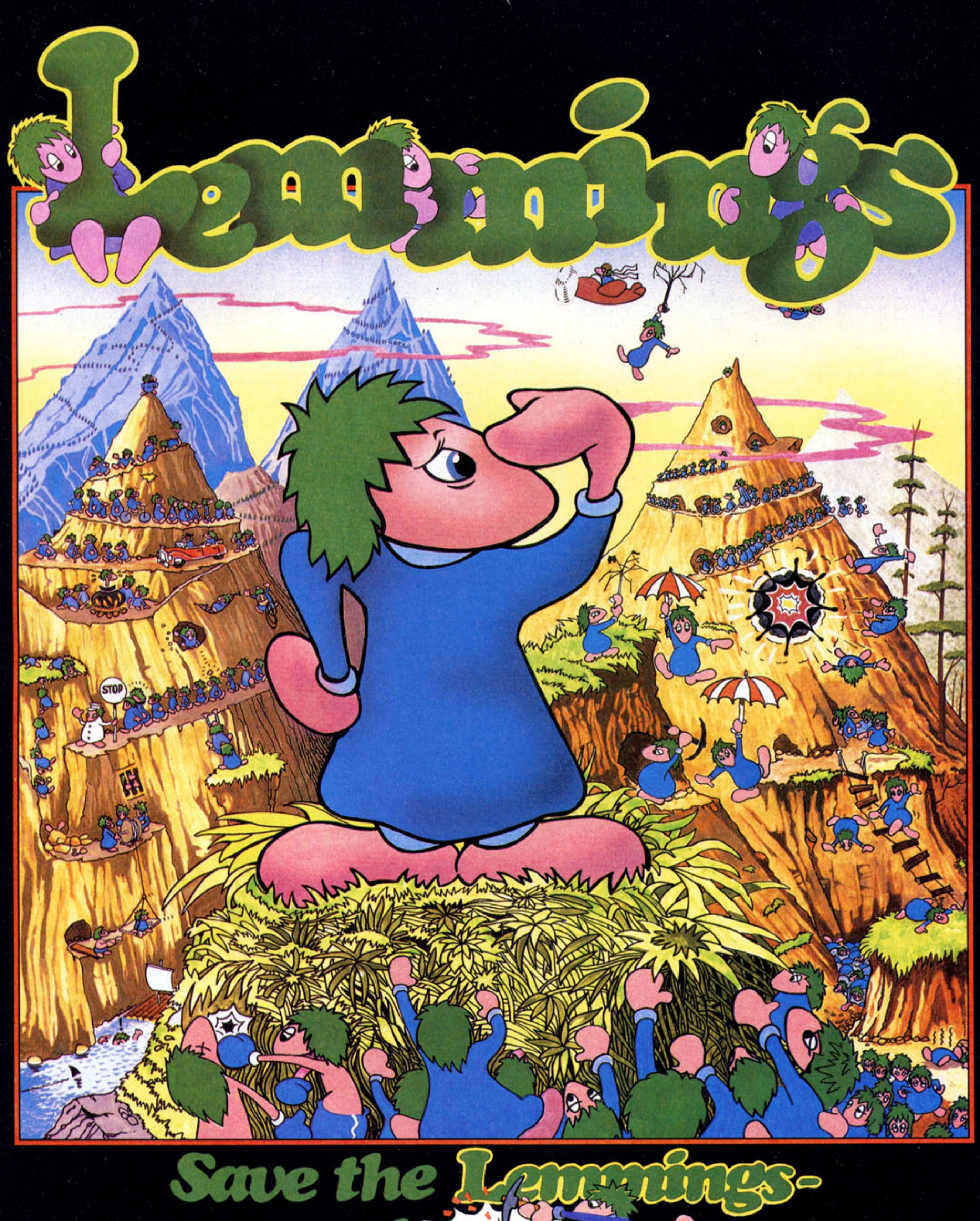
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Save the Lemmings- and

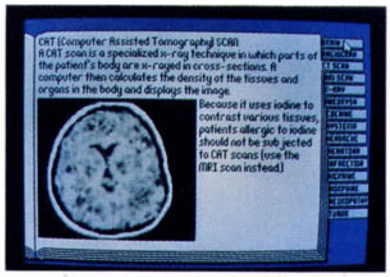
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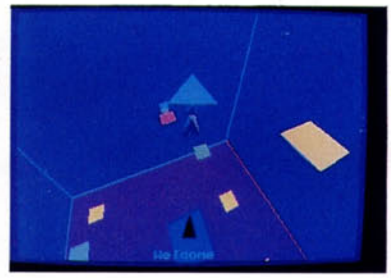
Life & Death II: The Brain



Designasaurus II



Super Spellicopter



Continuum



Back to the Future Part II



Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge

Britannica Software
San Francisco, CA

DESIGNASAURUS II: This new and improved version of the highly popular "Designasaurus" adds more information, adventures and improved graphics. It is amusing for ages five through adult (that's "egg to fossil" in dinosaur lingo), since entertainment and education are presented in equal parts in presenting various epochs, dinosaurs, and dinosaur mutations. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

SUPER SPELLICOPTER: Arcade action a la Nintendo is available in this arcade/educational experience. The objective, of course, is to improve the spelling ability of children, ages seven to fourteen. The kids will like the heavy emphasis on the arcade portion, but since *winning* will require improvement in the educational realm, the game should please the parents, as well. Words can be customized (into this week's spelling list, for example). The word on "Spellicopter:" Well done. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Data East
San Jose, CA

CONTINUUM: No, you're not hallucinating when you see the shapes spinning around before you (and that's just the copy protection!). Just follow the "bouncing mobile" as the player(s) search out the 32 crystals and cubes hidden in the 256-room arena. Either solitaire or more intensive competitive play (human-versus-human at the same machine or one player versus the clock) can be done, complete with fascinating camera angles (presumably so players won't get dizzy). Akin to "Harmony" or "Darwin's Dilemma" in raw fascination, "Continuum" is one to watch (for hours). IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

(Continued on page 78)

J. R. R. Tolkien's

The Lord of the Rings™

Vol. I

Experience the Excitement and Wonder of Tolkien's Middle Earth!

"Interplay's newest role-player tackles the Tolkien trilogy with top-flight graphics, sound and a new play system that should make adventuring in Middle Earth more realistic than ever before."

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IBM screens pictured.

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–Computer Gaming World

Combining the best elements of role-playing and graphic adventures, The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I uses stunning full screen, top-down, 256 color VGA graphics, smooth four directional scrolling, digitized sound, an easy to use point-and-click icon interface, and an off-line paragraph system to bring the depth of the true Tolkien experience to life via the computer.



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–Info Magazine

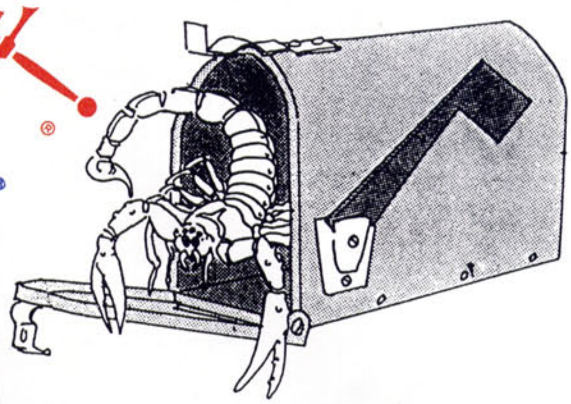
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To order The Lord Of the Rings, Vol. I, call 1-800-969-GAME. Available on MS-DOS for $54.95. Amiga coming soon.

The program is published with the cooperation of the Tolkien Estate and their publishers, George Allen & Unwin (publishers) Ltd. The plot of The Lord of the Rings, the characters of the hobbits, and the other characters from The Lord of the Rings are © George Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd. 1966 1974 1979 1981. © 1990 Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. MS-DOS is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

Scorpion's Mail



Well, the old mailbag's been pretty full lately. If things keep up at this rate, the post office will have to start delivering by the truckload (grin). Of course, with so many new releases this past Christmas season, that's not really surprising. And the spring-into-summer period looks to have a few interesting products on the market, too. Maybe I should get myself a bigger mailbox?

Before we go on to the good stuff, however, just a reminder about those SASEs. A surprising number of letters arrived during the past couple of months without that all-important "Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope" (SASE). Remember folks, if you live in the United States, you have to include one if you want a reply. Otherwise... well, 'nuff said about that. Let's reach into the bag and see what comes up.

King's Quest V: The Forbidden Forest is a one-way entry; once inside, you can't go back out the same way. You have to deal with the witch before you can find another exit. Also, when traipsing through the mountains with your trusty rope, don't be deceived: if the rope breaks, you're not using it in the right spot. Try somewhere else for a real cliff-hanger.

Quest For Glory II: In my article last issue, I forgot to mention an important thing (shame on me!). If you are playing a fighter, eventually you receive a note telling you to be at the Darb of Rafir at sundown. Unfortunately, there is no such street; it turns out this is a typo in the game. The correct street is Askeri Darb. By the way, it doesn't matter if you know this ahead of time, as nothing will happen until you're told to show up there... and remember, that's only for fighters.

Ultima VI: Some people are having trouble getting a lens from Ephemerides. They tell him they want a lens, he keeps asking what kind. Dontcha just love circular conversations? Actually, you *will* be able to get a lens from him, but that comes far, far along in the game... practically near the end. At that time, you should have the necessary item to shake him out of his "what kind" daze and get him working. Until that time, save yourself some frustration and don't ask about it.

Secret Of Monkey Island: Interesting how many folks are experiencing difficulty in getting the key from LeChuck's cabin. Shucks, that ought to be easy. After all, that key isn't made out of wood, y'know? And I won't be happy until you're happy, and I know you're gonna be happy when you figure out the answer. You just think about it.

Indiana Jones & The Last Crusade: Getting through all those Nazi guards in the castle is giving some people gray hairs, not to mention bloody knuckles. Well, I suppose if you're good enough and lucky enough, you might be able to left-hook your way through them. However, that's not really necessary. There are some books in the Venetian library that can help out in this situation. True, it's rather a bore to go searching through the stacks, but do it anyway. You'll be glad you did.

Bane Of The Cosmic Forge: Locked doors and grates seem to be the bane of some people's existence. Let's deal with grates first. Some of them you will never be able to open. Others require either a key or a special item (lockpick/Knock Knock *never* works on grates). Unfortunately, there is no way to tell them apart. If you can't get a grate open, leave it and go on to something else.

Doors are a slightly different matter. With a few exceptions, most doors will yield to a high lockpick skill or knock knock spell. However, if the lock jams, then only the proper key can open the door. Generally, if you see a lot of red when trying to pick a lock, it's an indication that the skill level is far too low for the lock, and you should try to find a key instead (iron keys, by the way, will open any door on the entry level).

Ultima V: This one is still going strong and still causing trouble for a lot of people, in particular for those searching for the entrance to Dungeon Doom. Well, you didn't think it would be easy, did you? Don't worry, it's down there, all right. Remember how you got the Shard of Cowardice? The technique here is pretty much the same.

Dragon Wars: I've mentioned this before (in a previous Mail column somewhere in the dim dark past), but as the questions keep coming in, it looks like a repeat is necessary. You can't get to Irkalla in the underworld or the island in the lake in the Mystic Wood (or even to the endgame) until you've done something for the City of The Mud Toad. *What* should be obvious. *How* is a little tricky, but you should be able to spell it out with a little thought.

Well, that's about all for this mailbag. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). **On GEnie:** visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US mail (remember that SASE!): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

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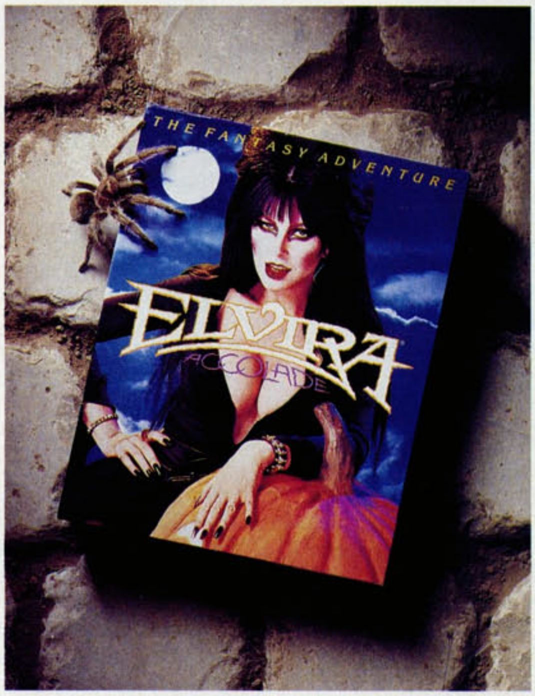


"Brilliant stuff. To sum it up real quickly, I'd say it's DUNGEON MASTER™ with much, much better graphics and a really tough 'adventure' appeal."
– ZERO

"The graphics are crystal-clear and beautifully designed. Play it at night with the lights off and the volume turned up high."
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"Of course, if you're *really* into *heavy* fantasy role-playing, you know size isn't everything, right? Well, rest assured—*my* fiendish fantasy has gobs of graphic sizzle, clever puzzles, real-time combat and a nifty little point-and-click interface. Heck, it's so easy to play it's scary."

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Circle Reader Service #9

"Caution: blood-curdling graphics. In fact, I've never seen the dead look so lifelike!"

"The look and feel of a graphic adventure with the depth of an FRP."





"How About A FREE Demo?"

"Hey! Fill this in, cut it out and mail it to Accolade, c/o Carla Parker, 550 S. Winchester Blvd., San Jose, CA 95128 and I'll make sure she rushes you an awesome FREE demo of Elvira, Mistress of the Dark.

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ADDRESS ____________________

CITY ____________ STATE ______ ZIP ______

PHONE NUMBER ____________________

How many FRP (Fantasy Role Playing for the un-knowing) games do you own? ______

Computer format (please check one): ☐ PC (5¼" only) ☐ Amiga



Playing with Power (Monger)

Electronic Arts' PowerMonger

By Peter Olafson

TITLE:	PowerMonger
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari St, IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Bullfrog
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA



The player is not exactly a god any more, as he was in **Bullfrog**'s previous effort, *Populous*. Now, the player is a soldier (a soldier with a rather goofy look on his face, in fact) and while one's followers maintain nominal loyalty, they obey an even higher authority: the growling in their stomachs!

Vox Populous?

In *Populous*, the player, as a god, had the power to influence worshippers by turning the landscape to their advantage and wreaking ecological havoc on their rivals. ("Have a volcano. No, no, have *three*!") In *PowerMonger*, the land is varied (but stable), and the people can be recruited and commanded directly. As one might expect, this is a good deal more challenging. The task is huge; there are 195 rectangular slices of land to be subdued, and the player may choose only those pieces adjacent to those already conquered to maneuver towards.

Pastoral Pictures From The Front

Where *Populous* was handsome in a readily portable, squared-off sort of way, *PowerMonger* is beautiful, and rather ornate and spindly. Where *Populous* was "gamey," *PowerMonger* is imbued with the depth of real life. The terrain is alive with activity. Carrier pigeons are seen carrying your orders to sub-commanders; an encampment leaves behind a dead campfire; sheep shudder on the hillsides, and where there are sheep there are shepherds; people (all equipped with names, homes, jobs and histories) go about their business; and the leaves on trees (all of specific species) change color as the season cycle goes round and round. This is a computer approximation of a living world and should be so treated.

How does one learn all this? Well, all right, maybe one is *something* of a god, for *PowerMonger* is equipped with a lovely array of tools to manipulate the view and bring up data. When the "Query" command is highlighted, a mouse click on virtually any object will summon relevant details. The miniature overhead map shows one's position and uses atlas-style overlays to show elevation, food, settlements and objects. The landscape can zoom in and out through seven levels of detail, scroll in eight directions and rotate in both. It is quite delightful to watch your army disappear into a mountain pass, give the map a spin, and watch them come out the other side. (This also brings to light a number of charming graphic features.)

Degrees Of Decrees

The command set is fairly simple: attack, move, collect food or men, invent, trade, offer alliance and spy, with other commands available to reapportion forces and inventories. Still, a lot of mileage has been obtained from the use of three postures (passive, neutral and aggressive) in conjunction with these commands. A passive attack may be little more than intimidation; an aggressive attack is wholesale slaughter. A passive "invent" command may produce pots useful for nothing but trading; an aggressive one may open a mine in a neighboring mountainside.

The posture setting is a versatile engine, but it doesn't cover as much as it might. For instance, it's rather dull and time-consuming to repeatedly issue the "equip invention" command to collect the individual possessions of a destroyed enemy army that lies strewn across the battlefield. High aggressiveness, in this case, seems simply to ensure that one possession is equipped (while on the "passive" setting, nothing will be) rather than how fervently the troops as a whole embrace your command.

Living In An Imperfect World

There are some quirks that make this patently realistic game seem unrealistic in places. For instance, it's impossible to tell what a community is inventing until they produce it. Also, even when one's commander is widely separated from the main body of his troops, they have access to inventory items he's only just acquired. (Hence, he may pick up boats on an island and suddenly find troops stranded on another island for want of boats migrating toward him. Perhaps he *is* a god, after all.)

Additionally, each territory is handled in isolation from those surrounding it — once it's conquered, it's done with. That permits players to indulge in ruthless, scorched-earth style tactics that might enrage the civilian population in a larger, integrated world. Other elements such as partisans, famine and plague might have been added to keep the commander looking over his shoulder and worrying not only about conquering a land, but also holding it together once he's moved on.

Putting The "Hard" Back Into Hardware

It is along the program's periphery that things get a bit hazy. The copy protection verges on the absurd. Beyond an almost non-copyable European Amiga DOS, users must also answer a question about maps that appear in the margins of the manual. Those maps are not exactly flashcards, and one is not even told precisely where to find them, but given a range of a half-dozen pages to search instead.

The game is also unsympathetic to peripherals. Bizarrely, while *PowerMonger* won't save to or load from a saved-game disk in DF1:, it nevertheless requires the presence of a disk in the second drive in order to save to a disk in DF0:. It does not install on hard disk, and it does not appear to use memory above 512K (it's very much a European game in that sense). It also doesn't multi-task, but apparently *does* run on the 3000.

Moreover, while the game will restore saved games at boot, it restores them only at the beginning of that particular conquest, regardless of how much progress has been made since then. To get back to the point at which play left off, one has to restore it *again*. For a game that supports just one drive, that's a real nuisance.

Power Trip

Nevertheless, the game at the core of *PowerMonger* is simply superb. It has that never-seen-before, awe-inspiring quality that accompanies all great games (much as it does great films and great music). It has an elegant simplicity that makes it a joy to play, an intimate level of involvement that makes it difficult to put down, and a sophistication that makes every game a surprise. (There's also the option to introduce data disks at the outset, so there may yet be surprises to come).

Pointers For Potential Powermongers

A *PowerMonger* warlord lives for the moment. The typical scenario begins with the easy conquest of the nearest village (at the lowest aggression level, in order to preserve its resources), the impressment of all available food, men and inventions for The Cause and casting about for similar targets. It's a brutal but effective snowballing technique that emphasizes military expediency at the expense of the region's future, and it will serve players well in many of the earlier scenarios.

The spying, trading and alliance commands may well prove mandatory in later conquests, but they have only limited usefulness in the first 45 or so. However, there's a useful form of spying built into the game. Every so often, you should range your mouse over the overview map to keep track of rival military preparations. Keep a special watch for armies on the march. As

TWIN ENGINE GAMING PRESENTS:

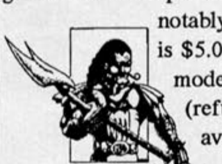
Out Time Days

a game of Time Travel in an alternate dimension



THE EXPERIENCE: OTD is a game of life on a strange world. Although populated by a variety of semi-humanoid races, it is nothing like the Earth that your character left behind. Gone is the industrial might of large nations. The multi-talented worker is a thing of the past. Even your famed Time Jumping skills have been checked to a certain degree. However, you do happen to be one of the few Time Jumpers on this world, and that in itself is a major strength.

You'll choose one of several sects to work with, or attempt to create your own from scratch, which will help set your general method of operation. As each new time opens, there are new discoveries to make, new lands to chart, and new people to meet. The world awaits change, and you are the catalyst.

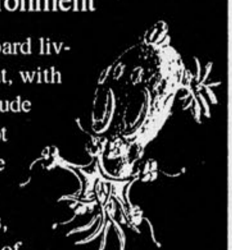


OUT TIME DAYS is a highly interactive role-playing Play-By-Mail game with turns processed weekly. It has received excellent reviews, notably from Flagship and Paper Mayhem. Turn cost is $5.00. The game is open ended and 99% computer moderated. The rulebook may be obtained for $5.00 (refundable with startup). A special startup is available that gives you the rulebook, the startup turn, and five turns for only $15.00.

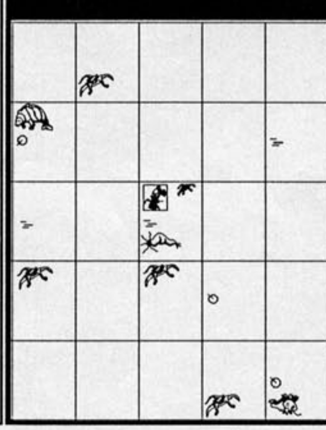
Dependable, weekly, error-free turns since 1984

Space Combat

a game of pure tactical combat... in a rather unique environment



You'll be fighting in an edgeless contest zone aboard living creatures. **Space Combat** is almost all combat, with some room for diplomacy. Offensive actions include the creature's Psychic Screams to mentally disrupt others, launching Inverse Mines that will implode near your enemy, freeing Spores to destroy internals, using Nerve Pulses to paralyze pesky scouts, and Virally Infecting your opponent in the hopes of taking over their alien. Each turn comes with a special full-page graphic printout of your ending position to aid you in planning.



Space Combat was designed to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. Every game starts with ten players, and as each is eliminated, the chances of the game ending will increase. Turnsheets are custom made on a laser printer to aid you in filling out your next turn. The games run about 12-18 turns. Cost is $3.50 per turn. A rulebook (required before you can join) is $1.00 (**free** if you mention this ad!)

Twin Engine Gaming; Dept 631; 3254 Maple Leaf Ct.; San Jose, CA 95121

Circle Reader Service #53

the aggressiveness of enemy commanders increases, they'll develop an affection for raiding your rear areas, and that may require diversion of your main force.

There are decided advantages in seizing the initiative and ambushing enemy armies on the march. In such cases, the leader is often more vulnerable than behind the shield of troops in a set-piece battle, and the enemy force rarely has a chance to assume its full fighting stance.

Invent a catapult or a cannon as soon as humanly possible. It may take some time, but it is *PowerMonger*'s ballistic missile. When attacking aggressively, each shot sends a flurry of white souls flapping their way to heaven, and can quickly make short shrift of even a numerically superior foe.

There will be instances in which food is in such short supply that it will serve better to leave conquered communities intact (and one's army of moderate size) in order to produce more. But recall that what isn't taken, the enemy may take. As one doesn't *need* a territory once conquered, scorched earth may be the best policy. Pillaging a village and killing everyone in sight can be distressingly successful in slowing down the enemy.

On the whole, don't attack with an aggressive posture unless enemy casualties are irrelevant — in other words, when a conquest is almost finished. It is often a good idea to attack at neutral level and wear down defenses until an advantage can be gained, and then switch to a passive posture. In larger towns, this may earn you a lieutenant.

However, be merciless with enemy armies in the field. It's quite possible to break their power with a single decisive battle, and then roll up the rest of the territory at leisure.

Don't be a control freak. Delegate authority to your lieutenants whenever possible. They can be effective as garrison captains in larger communities, running commando raids to regain lost resources in the rear or drawing off enemy forces in joint assaults on larger towns. (Try keeping them near the main party for better speed of response.)

Chart marches carefully and camp at critical junctures (an isthmus, a land bridge or a sharp bend in the coastline) so that men are not lost to the vagaries of terrain and gymnastics will not have to be performed to lure them back. The force that goes into battle piecemeal is begging to be chopped up accordingly.

Use a combined-arms approach. Even a good-sized party of bowmen (a potentially devastating force) can be surprised and overcome at close quarters. There's a decided advantage in having sword or pikemen tie up the enemy in hand-to-hand combat while the bowmen are free to let fly from the rear.

Since one will not always be able to fight at first, know that there is no shame in running away to fight another day. An example is found in the upper-right corner of the initial territory selection screen. Here your force is overmatched by blue-suited bowmen from the first (even if reinforced from the nearby village) and the only sensible alternative is to take the three available boats and head for the large island to the south in search of more vulnerable targets. (Hint: Pick up some boats when arriving there. The result will be pleasantly surprising.) **CGW**



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The Rumor Bag

by Ali Allee Ak-shun Pheri

In last issue's episode, our intrepid, bag-enshrouded reporter had just arrived in Bahrain. At press time for that issue, war had not yet broken out in the Persian Gulf. This issue should prove that our correspondent is no Peter Arnett. After all, his idea of a press pool is where one goes swimming and SPA reports involve hot tubs.

Before the blue sapphire waters of the gulf receded from my view, I couldn't help but notice the fishing dhows coming in from a hard day's work. I made a mental note to pick up one of the handmade models of the traditional Arab fishing boats while I was at the bazaar and headed down the Shaikh Isa bin Sulman Highway toward downtown.

Once my interpreter and I stopped the car. We approached a hyperactive muddle of Arab merchants and I had my interpreter speak to them. That's when I got my first surprise. Most of them spoke English and I had spent all this money on an interpreter. I felt something like a Japanese consumer who just purchased both a **Sega Genesis** and **IBM**-compatible machine, only to find out that the two corporations are planning to market a new machine in Japan that is *both* MS-DOS and Genesis MegaDrive compatible. IBM will provide the technology and Sega will provide the manufacturing. The 2.5-megabyte machine is supposed to use both the 80286 and 68000 chips. It is to be called the *Tera* in Japan, but it isn't definite whether it will come to the U.S. of A. or not.

My interpreter said something that



wasn't in English to one of the merchants and he smiled a toothy grin in my direction. He said he had information to sell concerning a company we monitor. Of course, one never buys at the quoted price. So, feigning disinterest, I told him I already knew the name of **Three-Sixty**'s land-based version of *Harpoon* was going to be *Patriot*. I even laid it on thicker by noting that *MegaFortress* will probably have an add-on scenario disk covering the Philippines/ China region with missions based on Dale Brown's upcoming *Skymasters* novel.

However, when he said the information had to do with a deal between **Sony** and **Nintendo**, I was immediately all ears. I had to have it. He told me he wanted 18 BD; I offered 10. He screamed that I was a thief, but dropped his price to 15. I said, "Twelve!" He scowled. I began to walk away. He rushed to my side, spouted something about stealing the falafel from his children's mouths and lowered the price to thirteen and a half. We agreed.

He told me that **Sony** and **Nintendo** have agreed to market a CD-ROM drive for the 16-bit Nintendo. Expected to be released in the $700.00 range for the Japanese consumer, he didn't know if it would be coming to America or not. **Sony** will sell the unit as an add on, but **Nintendo** will package the drive and *SuperFamicom* into a package deal. In Japan, many people are expected to use the system for desktop publishing keyboard. According to my source, the CD-ROM format will *not* be compatible with other CD-ROM formats, but the new format will allow **Sony** and **Nintendo** to open an entirely new home entertainment market using the former's entertainment properties (CBS and Columbia Studios). Between the new drive and the laptop they are building for **Apple Computer**, **Sony** is going to be a busy corporation.

A jeep full of staffers from the U. S. Embassy pulled into the market, flanked by Gurkha bodyguards (the famous British troops from Nepal). They weren't carrying guns, but I spotted their famous kukris (curved knives) and decided to mind my inveterately wagging tongue. One of the staffers took me aside, warned me that even though Bahrain is a rear area, it might not be safe after the 15th of January. He encouraged me to leave at the earliest opportunity, strongly suggesting that I should get out to Bahrain International, find the next flight out and say, "Beam me up, Scottie!"

With discretion the better part of valor, I recalled all the preparations for war I'd seen and "reluctantly" agreed to leave.

However, to show me there were no hard feelings, he handed me a grimy envelope. "One of your subscribers has a friend in Arizona," he whispered. It was a letter from Mike Stackpole, one of the *Wasteland* designers. Mike implied that he was working on a high-profile science fiction project that was going to be *both* a video game and a computer role-playing game. "It's *StarTrek*!" I cried excitedly. "That's what **Interplay** is doing! They're programming the video game for **Konami** — that's what they're going to use those neat fractal graphics of planets for! Finally, a *real* role-playing game's going to be based on the TV series!"

Giving the staffer a mock salute, I jumped back into the rental car, longing for the "good old days" of peace and tranquility. "Good old days!" my interpreter interrupted my reverie. "This is the Middle East! We've had war since the days of Father Ibraham." I readily admitted this was true and, by way of apology, noted that Norm Koger was making excellent progress on a new wargame for **SSI**. Based on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, *Jihad* will offer a refined *Red Lightning* system and a construction set.

It was frustrating to realize that I had been in Bahrain for a full day and hadn't even managed to get one of those great lamb sandwiches they put on pita bread. Oh, well! Maybe I could buy one of those model dhows at the airport. Then, the trip wouldn't be *totally* wasted. **cgw**

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Circle Reader Service #45

Teaching an "Old Dog" New Tricks

Sneak Preview: Three-Sixty's MegaFortress

by Bruce Maurier and the CGW Editorial Staff





More than one type of gambling occurs in the Nevada desert. In the top-secret realms of "Dreamland," service personnel and defense department experts place billion-dollar bets on defense technology. In *Flight of the Old Dog*, a best-selling techno-thriller by Dale Brown, the Nevada desert becomes the birth site of the B-52I, a high-tech delivery system that does the B-52H StratoFortress one better.

Dale Brown explains that "I made up the plane, but Three-Sixty has done so much work on the simulation that it really feels right." Although Brown is a former U.S. Air Force Captain and actually served as navigator on B-52s, he readily admits that he wasn't aware of the actual existence of some of the ordnance that he placed on the plane during the writing of the book, but he is pleased with how close he came to what was really happening. "Some weapons," he observed, "I sort of made up and later found out they existed."

MegaFortress, the combat flight simulation based on Brown's book, has become a true labor of love for the best-selling author. Brown has been a long-time fan of computer games. In fact, his first paid writing was a review of *Ft. Apocalypse* for *Compute's Gazette*. Then, he wrote *Flight of the Old Dog* on a C-64 word processor. He admitted to *CGW* that he really bought the computer to play games, but told his wife he was getting it for the word processor.

Brown never actually experienced combat during his period of active duty with the Air Force, but trained for eight years of rigorous combat exercises to be capable of dropping tactical nuclear weapons (especially the two- to five-kiloton high-altitude containment drops of "Enhanced Radiation Devices" — neutron bombs). Dale did share with *CGW* about two false alarms, however.

"They were the most frightening experiences of my life. In such a situation, the first thing the navigator does is decode the messages from the command post. The first letters decoded will indicate whether the alert is actual or merely an exercise. If he shouts out, 'Exercise,' everyone will be a little less harried. If he says, 'Actual,' that's a sobering experience."

Now, working in conjunction with designer/producer Jon Correl and lead programmer Rick Banks, Brown has a chance to help others "experience" such harrowing moments in a modified way. The design team began with brainstorming the "way it is" with Dale and having reality checks for each crew station. Even such details as wondering what it *sounds* like when a threat comes across the electronic countermeasures equipment were handled in these sessions. Then, Dale provided unclassified manuals for the B-52G and B-52H. Finally, Dale has tried to talk the design team through the emotional impact of the game. Brown says he is not primarily concerned with what lights go on when and making the bomber turn at just the right angle when the arrow keys are pushed. Rather, "I've brought things to the game that force the user to use his own intelligence and see the big picture; then he has to maneuver the airplane or switch between stations and react to the entire situation.

Ac"Crew"ed Assets

One of the most interesting aspects of *MegaFortress* is that the emphasis is *not* simply on how good the pilot is or how well the plane handles (the B-52 is obviously too prodigious for dogfighting). Rather, the emphasis of the game is on completing the mis-

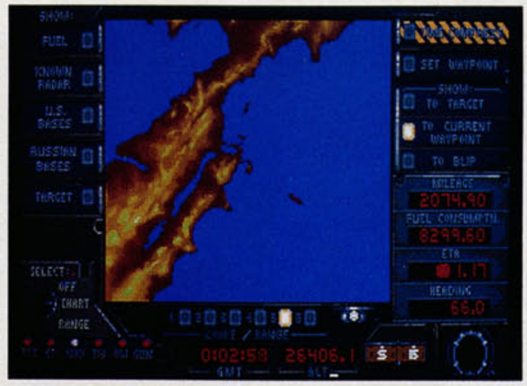
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Circle Reader Service #47



sion using *all* the assets of a well-trained crew. Brown, trained as a B-52 and FB-111 navigator, comments, "If you are at the radar navigator's station, for instance, not only do you handle navigation and terrain following and so on, but you also operate some defensive weapons. You have the responsibilities you have been trained for plus other responsibilities as well. It's really tough!"

Players are required to alternate between five different crew stations in *MegaFortress*. The five positions are pilot, navigator (mission commander), electronic warfare officer, weapons officer and co-pilot.

Naturally, the navigator's position is given a top priority because B-52 navigators do much more than keep track of the plane's location. The radar navigator directs the weapons and bomber defense for the forward part of the airplane, looks for bogeys, tracks the terrain when the plane is at low altitude and makes sure that they can put the weapon on target. In fact, the Air Force actually calls them mission commanders now, rather than navigators. So, in *MegaFortress*, whenever players are in the radar navigation station, they become the "mission commander."

The pilot's position is probably second place in mission priority. In the simulation, players have to handle takeoffs and landings as pilots, but avoiding terrain and steering the airplane is dependent on commands from other stations. A major difference between the typical combat flight simulator and *MegaFortress* is that most require the pilot to *engage* the enemy. *MegaFortress* requires the pilot to avoid detection and get away when necessary.

Brown notes that the B-1-style nose of the *MegaFortress* only adds .1 Mach to the B-52I's speed. However, he says that this is very important with regard to the plane's capacity for succeeding in a low altitude mission. "You can fly lower if you can fly faster because you will have more power to get outside the ridgeline. If you fly slower, you don't have the power to fly up and down the mountain very steeply." Hence, the fictional plane used in the game can travel about eight miles per minute as opposed to the B-52H and its five or six miles per minute. The faster the pilot can fly the plane, the less time in the sights of the bogeys and the more likely the crew will succeed.

Another crew position is that of the defensive system operator. This crew member uses sensors to detect and jam enemy aircraft. He/she also directs the tail-firing missiles, air-to-air missiles, chaff bundles and quail decoys. If the threat is on the surface, the defensive system operator directs air-to-surface weapons (particularly HARM missiles against enemy radar).

Naturally, the primary job of the electronic warfare officer is to classify and call out threats. Should those threats be enemy fighters, the EWO will coordinate with the gunner. In the course

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of flying through enemy territory, jamming is not usually activated until the EWO is certain that he has been "painted" by enemy radar. Then, if the plane faces imminent attack, the EWO takes control of the bomber.

The final position is that of the co-pilot where players will discover a detailed equipment screen (though there is no exterior view). This position will handle some of the more mundane functions of the mission.

Designing Hitmen

The aircraft model for *MegaFortress* was developed from unclassified B-52H manuals, then tweaked to make things simultaneously fit the fiction of Dale's book and become more user-friendly. For example, the product started with the actual pre-flight checklist for a B-52H. Then, the list was slightly reduced so that the game didn't seem like work. The designers also have the eight different checklists that a mission commander goes through prior to, during and after the bomb run. Part of their challenge is to balance the realism and skill with what players will actually want to do.

Several realistic aspects have been designed into this simulation that are not usually seen in combat flight simulations. First, rather than sending up the circling planes as fodder for the practice missions, the training missions in *MegaFortress* are modeled after combat exercises and will increase with difficulty as the players move through them. Most real-world practice missions are terribly boring, but those in this game feature an increasing challenge and more realistic aspects than those in most games.

Second, players will never really get an ID on a target. So, there will be both known and unknown targets on the screen at all times. Players will have to determine which is which in much the same way that real crews have to make those decisions. In fact, even the handling of target assignments is significantly different. Rather than offering a primary and secondary target for a given sortie, the crew is given a list of targets integrated into the flight plan. As the route is flown, three to ten targets become active. According to Brown, the only reason *not* to hit the targets is because something was going on that was outside the rules of engagement. In contrast, Brown notes that A-10s might be given a certain area and told to take out anything that moves, but B-52s stick to their list and flight plan.

Third, damage is extremely significant in the design of *MegaFortress*. B-52s are large planes and can take a lot of damage, but increases in damage will create multiple opportunities for malfunctions. Hence, malfunctions will be part of the game. Since a recurring theme in Brown's fiction is the necessity of back-up systems, this seems to be an important feature.

Another significant factor in the *MegaFortress* design is the fact that the progression of threats is logical. Encounters are built off patrols and are affected by how well the B-52 crew has avoided detection. This means that one will encounter the right types of planes flying the right kinds of patrols as opposed to the "anything goes" randomness of some designs.

Scissors, Iraq, Paper

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Second Front	-	-	40	-	34
Gettysburg	16	16	40	-	16
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F-15 Strike Eagle I	20	20	20x	20	-
Electronic Arts:					
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Bard's Tale II	16	13	-	-	16
Bard's Tale III	13	13	-	-	-
Might and Magic I	20	20	20x	-	-
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Strike Fleet	13	13	13	-	-
Wasteland	13	13	13	-	-
Music Construction Set	13	13	13	16	-
Demon Stalkers	-	10	-	-	-
Patton vs. Rommel	-	13	13	-	-
Skyfox	-	10	-	-	-
Skyfox II	-	10	-	-	-
Zany Golf	-	-	13	16	16
Skate or Die	-	13	13	-	-
Ski or Die	-	13	13	-	-
Maniac Mansion	16	16	16x	-	16
Pipe Dream	20	-	20x	-	-
Sentinel Worlds I	-	13	13x	-	-
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Zak McKracken	-	16	16x	-	-

x = 3.5 IBM Disk Available • Release Dates: a = Jan 91 b = Feb 91 c = Mar 91 d = Apr 91

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least two and possibly three geographical areas. First, of course, the game will feature the "Old Dog" scenario. The victory conditions are simple in that one takes the plane in, bombs the target (a killer laser complex) and gets away. The "Old Dog" scenario begins in the top secret Dreamland hangar. There, players will have to take off with their B-52 while under fire from terrorists. By the time players can successfully accomplish that task, they should be emotionally hooked into the game.

Second, the game will include B-52 missions in Iraq. The venerable 36-year-old design has proved itself to still be a formidable weapon with tremendous range, massive firepower and a marvelous view of the battlefield. Missions in the Persian Gulf area will include all the targets heard about in the briefings from the front: bridges, fortified hangars, bunkers, oil refineries, infant baby formula... er... chemical warfare production facilities, nuclear facilities, mobile SCUD launchers and targets of opportunity. The "Old Dog" (unlike the B-52s we read about in the Gulf War) uses smart weapons, as opposed to converted bombs suited for so-called "carpet-bombing."

An added dimension to the Persian Gulf missions is the use of the Joint STARS plane. Basically a roving 707 with almost as much sophisticated electronics equipment as an AWACS, the STARS is an acronym meaning, *Strategic Targeting, Attack and Reconnaissance System*. It does for ground targets what AWACS accomplish for air targets. Hence, the inclusion of this system in the game is a natural for a game dealing with heavy-duty bombers.

The Joint STARS uses a synthetic aperture radar, essentially a side-looking radar that uses the direction of the airplane to get precise resolution of targets. It can then pass this information along automatically to other aircraft. Currently, unclassified information is that this data is passed verbally to other aircraft, but if successful, it is designed to eventually send data packets from computer to computer. The information collected by Joint STARS provides targeting information and weapons recommendations.

Other geographical areas which might yet appear in either the game or in add-on disks include the narrow gap between Alaska and Russia, as well as the Philippines to Red China area depicted in Brown's upcoming *Skymasters* novel.

"Bear" Brown's Debriefing

At the conclusion of each mission, players will be treated to a debriefing from Brown himself. Brown will judge how the crew did in avoiding detection, as well as how they handled threats (SAMs, MiGs and mechanical failures) and what the BDA (Battlefield Damage Assessment) indicates.

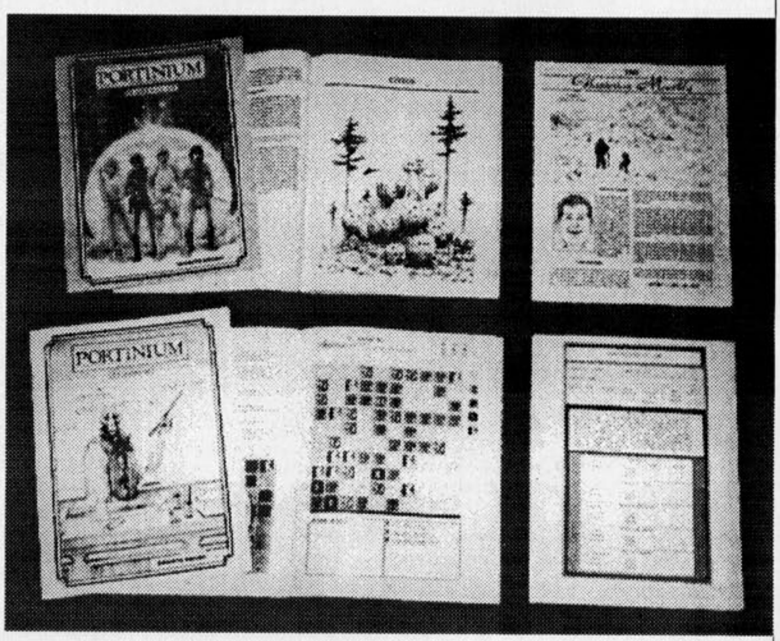
If *MegaFortress* sounds both different and more complex than many combat flight simulations on the market, Brown says that this is as it should be. "At the risk of turning people off, the game as it is meant to be played should be complex. I don't want people to get the impression that it's easy to fly a B-52, even with all the automatic equipment." One thing is certain: *MegaFortress* is not being designed to be a "run of the mill" flight simulation. **cgw**

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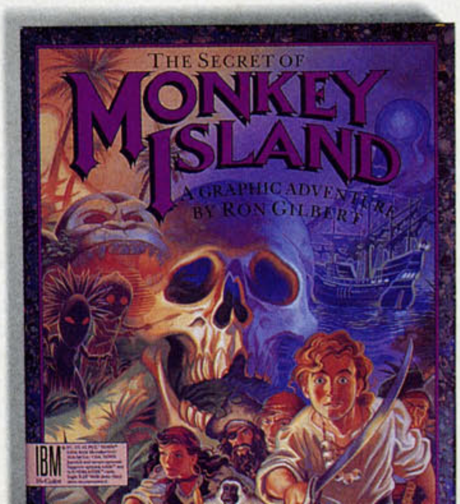
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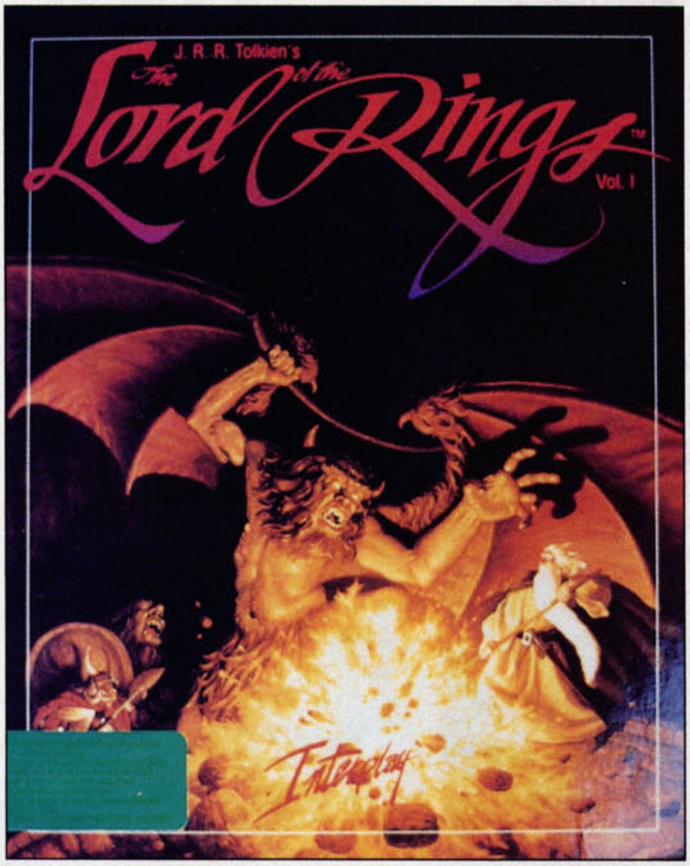


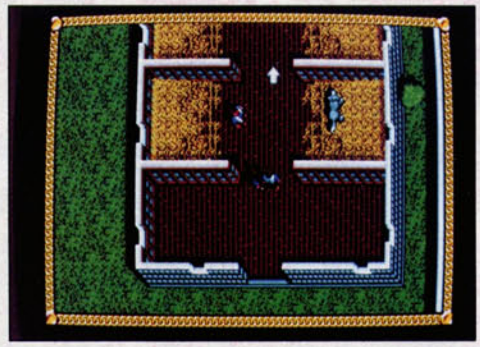
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TITLE:	J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord Of The Rings Vol. I
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$54.95
DESIGNERS:	Paul Jaquays, Scott Bennie, Troy A. Miles, Bruce Schlickbernd
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Santa Ana, CA

One Ring to Rule Them All

Interplay's The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I

by Charles Ardai

It could be argued that in all recorded history there has only been one truly successful collaboration between an author and a computer game company. That project would be **Infocom**'s text adventure, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, designed in conjunction with Douglas Adams. The game quickly became a bestseller and still remains a favorite six years after its release. Other attempts to work with authors to develop either original or licensed games have generally been failures, sometimes noble and sometimes not.

Synapse's *Mindwheel*, carefully crafted by poet Robert Pinsky, was both exquisite and exquisitely boring; **Telarium**'s line of science-fiction collaborations had their heart in the right place, but little else; and even Douglas Adams' second foray into computer game design, **Infocom**'s *Bureaucracy*, flopped like a Babel fish out of water.

Attempts simply to adapt literary properties, sans authorial input, have fared little better. Isaac Asimov's *Robots of Dawn* turned into an earnest but forgettable adventure game from **Epyx**; ditto Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonriders of Pern*; and who can forget **Mindscape**'s plodding version of Stephen King's *The Mist*? (Although one tries.)

Why this should be is something of a mystery. A bad game is a bad game, of course — but most of these games are *not* bad, per se. What they are is sincere, dedicated attempts by fans of a given work to translate that work to the computer game medium. If this does not usually work, it is because sincerity and dedication do not, by themselves, make good games.

What does make good games is inspiration and creativity. If working with another author's material does anything, it is to usually to inhibit a designer's own inspiration and creativity. Some designers hew so close to the original that they may just as well have typed the original text into an ASCII file and left it at that. Others are so bold that they attempt to inject their own ideas into the author's work — a hubristic misstep, since such accretions invariably announce themselves to be just that, by blending into the author's universe as inconspicuously as a stripper at a wake. Readers of the author's work escape such games either bored, offended, or in some memorable instances, both.

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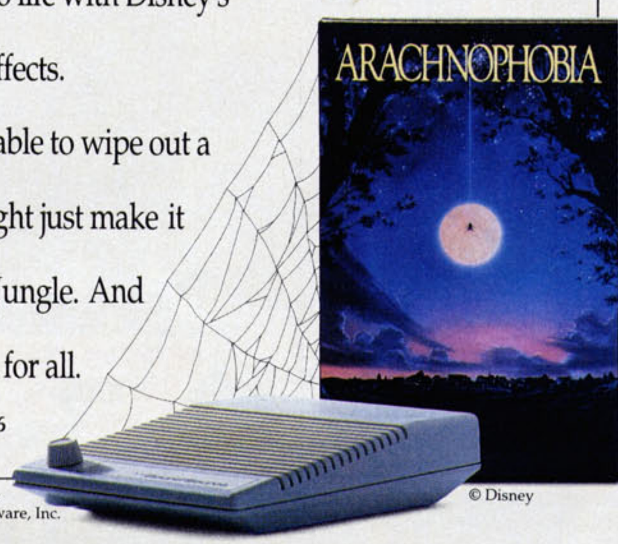




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Word on the Rings (Description)

What all this has to do with *The Lord of the Rings* should be clear enough to gamers familiar with the myriad of fantasy role-playing games based either explicitly or implicitly on Tolkien's seminal saga. One cannot swing a dead cat in a software emporium without getting fur all over a dozen games which draw their inspiration (and sometimes more) from Papa J.R.R.'s imaginings. Many of these *have* been successful, because they capture the spirit and enjoyment of the original without having to carry the burden of actual fidelity.

This is why one approaches a game such as Interplay's *The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I*, which purports to be the first part of a definitive and faithful three-volume adaptation, with trepidation. It has all been done, and overdone. There have been quite enough *Lord of the Rings* games already! What can yet another offer? More to the point, if what it offers is unprecedented fidelity, should one greet that news with applause or a yawn?

The answer, as is so often the case, is a little bit of both. The mechanics of the game are ordinary and will be familiar to anyone who has ever played a CRPG before. One essentially has the same commands at one's disposal. It is simply that an icon-driven command system allows access to the party's possessions, skills, weapons, magic, and so forth, rather than a "menu" per se. This allows the action to take place on a bigger canvas and makes the screen appear more aesthetically pleasing and the game world seem implicitly larger. The interface seems comfortable and this reviewer found little to take issue with in the gameplay. Combat is smooth and fair; movement is as quick as one can expect (if it seems at all tedious, it is only because the landscape is so enormous); and the designers make a genuine effort to incorporate different racial characteristics and personal skills into the narrative.

"Narrative" is an important word in discussing *Lord of the Rings*, since this is not a hack-and-slash campaign. Encounters are rarely incidental — everything that happens in the game has some impact on the plot. Then, too, weapons, treasures, and (especially) magic items and spells are hard to come by, in keeping with Tolkien's approach in the novels. This may disappoint more hardened gamers who want bang for their buck, but the complexity and depth of the storytelling should definitely attract others.

In fact, Interplay describes their intent as to create an "almost **Infocom**-style" story within an RPG format. With a large roster of vibrant characters and a clever set of nested puzzles and quests (solve this before you can do that, talk to 'A' before you can pass 'B,' etc.), **Interplay** has gone a long way toward accomplishing this goal.

Creature of Hobbit (Negative Observations)

However, it seems almost inevitable that the game suffers for being an adaptation. The overall plot *is* the plot of Tolkien's novels: Frodo Baggins, a hobbit, inherits what turns out to be the One True Ring from his Uncle Bilbo, who won it from a decrepit ex-hobbit called Gollum. The Dark Lord Saddam — oops, Sauron — wants the ring to cinch his universal dominion, but to do that, he has to find it and steal it. Frodo's task (and yours, Jim, should you choose to accept it) is to drop the pesky thing into a volcano at the other end of Middle Earth and be rid of it once and for all.

That's the big story. Along the way there are lots of little stories as: Frodo tangles with agents of Evil; meets friends, helpers, and enemies; encounters dangerous monsters; and tries to make his

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This Mo.	Last Mo.	Type	Title	Publisher
1	**1**	RP	★★ No. 1 ★★ Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday™	SSI™
2	**3**	RP/STRATEGY	Centurion: Defender of Rome™	Electronic Arts®
3	—	FAMILY	Life and Death™	The Software Toolworks®
4	**2**	EDUCATION	Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing!™	The Software Toolworks
5	**13**	FAMILY	The Chessmaster 2100™	The Software Toolworks
6	**12**	SIM	Harpoon™	Three-Sixty™
7	**11**	STRATEGY	Populous™	Electronic Arts
8	NEW	ACTION	Night Hunter	UBI Soft
9	NEW	ARCADE	Arcade Action Pack™	Mindscape/Software Toolworks
10	**14**	SIM	The Blue Max: Aces of the Great War™	Three-Sixty
11	**17**	RP	The Bard's Tale® III: Thief of Fate	Electronic Arts
12	**10**	SPORTS	PGA TOUR® Golf	Electronic Arts
13	—	RP	It Came From The Desert™	Cinemaware®
14	**9**	SIM	Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain™	Lucasfilm Games™
15	**6**	RP	The Secret of Monkey Island™	Lucasfilm Games
16	NEW	SIM	Das Boot™	Three-Sixty
17	**16**	SIM	688 Attack Sub™	Electronic Arts
18	NEW	ACTION	The Untouchables™	Ocean®
19	NEW	ACTION	Golden Axe™	Sega-IDG®
20	**18**	RP	AD&D®: Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI
21	NEW	ACTION	Night Shift™	Lucasfilm Games
22	—	RP	Starflight™ 2	Electronic Arts
23	**25**	SPORTS	John Madden Football™	Electronic Arts
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RP = Role-playing SIM = Simulation

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party strong enough to do battle with Sauron. Old friends crop up along the way: elves, dwarves, Balrogs, Gandalf, Tom Bombadil. There are also new friends and challenges, most centered around a search to unearth the "Golden Wheel" and "Durin's Axe," two magic items one wants to get to before the orcs do.

All this is good enough, as far as it goes. The problem is that it does not go far beyond where Tolkien went. The new material is generally in the Tolkien spirit, but it owes more to *Zork* and *Enchanter* than to anything distinctly Tolkienesque; and the old material... well, it is old material. Wonderful old material, but better on paper than on a monitor.

If this isn't enough, the game has yet another problem: it is only a third of the total story, much as *The Fellowship of the Ring* is one-third of *The Lord of the Rings*. It draws to a close with a semi-cliffhanger outside Lothlorien, and then one has to wait perhaps a year for Volume Two, and another for Volume Three. There is something inherently unsatisfying in this, as there is in reading in the instructions about things one can do... but not in this game. (About Bravado, the manual says, "This skill is not useful in [this game], but will play a role in... the next two games in this series." About a certain magic item: "These items will not appear until the second game in this series." Great).

Tolkien Gratification (Conclusions)

There is a great deal to enjoy in *The Lord of the Rings* — richly detailed graphics, a soundtrack that doesn't get irritating even after being repeated in an endless loop, some pulse-pounding catastrophes and escapes — and one has to respect the diligence and pride that has gone into the meticulous re-creation of Middle Earth. {LIFT?} Tolkien, perfectionist that he was, would be proud. {Close Lift?} Still, what Tolkien fan will do more than offer up a grudging smile at that old chestnut, "Speak, friend, and enter?" By the same token, what Tolkien fan will enjoy the liberties taken with Strider's character in the name of "challenging" the knowledgeable gamer? Fidelity may be dull, as the marriage counselor said, but infidelity will surely get one into trouble.

In any event, Interplay's game is what we have, and it is certainly good enough to provide hours of entertainment for the more demanding CRPG player. What it is **not**, is special enough to carry the Tolkien name. Not that any previous *LOTR* incarnation has been better — none has — but one *could* be, and that is enough to diminish one's appreciation of this game. As Jorge Luis Borges wrote, on a different matter entirely (but not so different at heart), "It is a victory... all is well... and yet nothing has happened. In our veins the blood runs no faster. Our hands have not sought the bow. No one has turned pale."

No one will turn pale from *The Lord of the Rings, Vol. I*, either from exhilaration or from offense. This is not a bad thing, nor is it particularly a good thing. *The Lord of the Rings* may well hit the bestseller lists, and more power to it if it does. It deserves it. Yet, one must remember, this only means there is nothing else available that is better.

In short, *The Lord of the Rings* is a bright and enjoyable and perfectly harmless game which would have benefitted greatly from an active, rather than a posthumous, collaboration with the author. **CGW**

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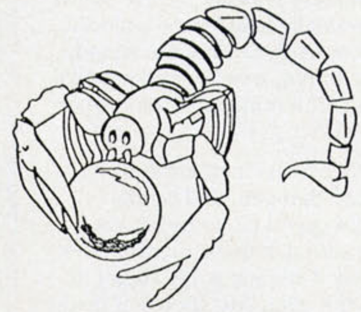
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Scorpion's View



Scorpia Casts Light on Hard Nova

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and, often, controversial perspective.

Just let me get my crystal ball out here... clink... clink... Ah, there we go. Ahem, looking into the depths, I see... ouch! Someone get me my cool shades! Those laser blasts are pretty bright! Almost as bright as a nova....

Hard Nova is a re-working of a previous game system, *Sentinel Worlds I: Future Magic*. Anyone who has played *Sentinel Worlds* will notice similarities in the two products, but *Hard Nova* contains *much* that has improved since the prior game. However, the two are completely stand-alone and you can't bring over your team from *Sentinel Worlds* (so if you've been hanging on to them for the sequel, well, better forget it).

Hard Nova is set in an area of space known as the Four Systems, not exactly the most peaceful of regions. Your character — either Nova (if female) or Stark (if male) — is a freelance mercenary for the Starkiller group. The Starkillers take on jobs from whoever has the money to pay for it and send you out to do the dirty work. It's one way to make a living.

You begin by choosing either Nova or Stark as your main character. There is no creation process involved, since both come with pre-defined abilities and those can't be changed, at least not at the start. Skill improvement *can* occur, however.

Skills are all-important in the game. Unlike virtually every other CRPG on the market, *Hard Nova* has no physical stats. Typically in games of this type, a character has a separate set of attributes representing strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, and so on. That is not the case here.

The closest you come to that is with fitness (which determines how many hit points you get upon advancing a level), aptitude (which governs the number of skill points you receive), and agility (how well you avoid being hit in combat). All other skills relate directly to doing something, such as using weapons, piloting spacecraft, programming, and so on. This is an interesting approach, and something out of the ordinary.

In fact, it's a refreshing change not to have to go through a long, tiresome rerolling process to create a viable character. Of course, this technique is not necessarily suitable for all types of CRPGs, but in the case of *Hard Nova*, it works quite well.

One skill that didn't seem of much use here was hand-to-hand combat. Your opponents are armed with tough weapons and are best killed as quickly as possible from a distance; you don't want to go running up to them (which isn't easy, anyway) to slice them with a knife. What you need to concentrate on at the start are firearms, fitness and aptitude; later you can work on special weapons, tactics, agility and various spaceship skills.

The game begins with Nova (or Stark) on Mastassini, taking in some R&R. Nova has just had an unpleasant experience: her ship was destroyed by a freak meteor hit, killing everyone but herself and her Bremer navigator. The Starkillers have replaced the vessel, but it's up to Nova to replace the crew.

One recruit can be found almost immediately in the bar; others will turn up as the game progresses. Some join willingly; others may have to be bribed or convinced, one way or another. All come with their own sets of skills, which can be increased as they gain experience.

After you've fooled around enough on Mastassini and blasted off into space, you are recalled to Starkiller Headquarters for your first assignment: retaking a hijacked Ciberan transport ship. Since this is not as easy as it might seem, you'll want to build up some skills before you go running off to Ciberan. That's where the robomaze comes in very handy.

Unlike many games of this type, there are very few random encounters. Hence the robomaze, a good replacement for tedious random battles. For a fee, you enter an arena and fight against robots, while picking up little flags (bronze, silver or gold) which can be traded for cash at any weapons store. That's important, since (a) the fee for the maze rises each additional time you go in and (b) you use up ammo pretty fast in there.

The best part, though, is that you don't die if your hitpoints go to zero or lower. You're just "knocked out" and the team is removed from the maze, with whatever experience and flags they've managed to garner up to that point. You also learn how to handle yourself in combat generally. Nova (or Stark) is under your control, but your teammates (as they did in the previous game) fire at will at any available targets. Unfortunately, while that aspect works out well, some parts of combat don't.

Targeting, in particular, is an aggravation when there are many opponents on the screen. Whether you're using a mouse or the keyboard, the only way to pick a target is to cycle through all available enemies, one at a time. This would not be so bad, if only the targeting began near instead of far. However, invariably, the targeting begins with someone who is far away, and moves in slowly from there. Sometimes, it takes "forever" to light up someone nearby you can shoot at in the first place, and second, you're often cycling so fast that it's easy to hit the bar one time too many and find yourself starting all over again at the other end of the screen.

The only other awkward part of the game is inventory handling. Each character can individually hold "eight" objects (actually, five, as three slots are already taken up by armor, weapon and medical suit (an item for automatic healing when damage is taken).

Since that's not much, there is also a generic "pool" that can hold twenty items. Anything picked up or bought goes into the pool, if there's room. If not, you can't buy it or pick it up. To get an item out of the pool, you choose a character, go to that person's inventory screen and type "P" to bring in the pool item.

The pool itself is represented by a small window displaying the icon of the current pool item along with its name. If what you want to take isn't displayed, you have to cycle through the objects one at a time; there is no way to scroll back and forth.

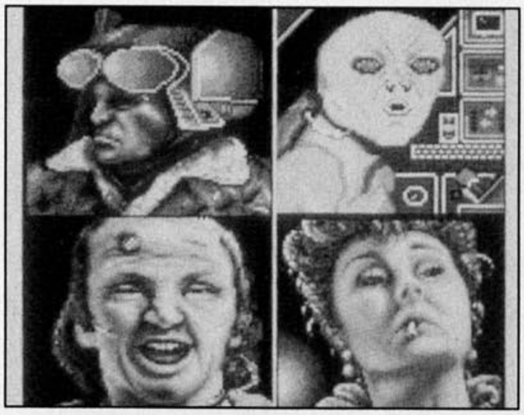
To give an item to someone outside the party, the object must be in the pool window, but you have to go to Nova's personal inventory screen for the command to transfer the item to the NPC. On the other hand, to use a special item, such as a magcard, it must be in Nova's inventory, not the pool.

This system can become very tedious, especially in the game's latter stages when you're running around with plenty of ammunition and special items. Then you have to do much shuffling around, dropping and picking up items. Fortunately, items dropped do *not* disappear; they stay where they are and you can go back for them whenever you want.

Space travel/combat is pretty much the same as it was in *Sentinel Worlds*, except for the addition of missiles that can be fired at distant targets. There is a large screen that shows your ship and the immediate area, plus a smaller screen to the right that encompasses most of the system you're in. It's the small screen you use to see which direction to go to reach a planet, ship or stargate (the stargates are the portals to other systems).

Fighting in space is simple: target a ship, and turn on the lasers. Your vessel automatically fires at the target when it's in range until you run out of energy, your lasers are too damaged to fire or the target is destroyed or leaves the vicinity. For ships not in laser range, you activate a missile and hope it hits. Usually, one missile hit will take out the enemy vessel.

If you'd rather not fight, or your ship is



taking too much damage, you can "step on the gas" and run away. Most enemies only pursue for a short time, then give up the chase. This tactic also works with enemy missiles; if you go fast enough, you can outrun them (a recommended tactic, since you can't shoot down enemy missiles).

An interesting feature is the use of "ship signatures." This allows your vessel to "disguise" itself as a different type of spacecraft. As you target different ships (you can always target something without shooting at it), your spacecom officer analyzes the target's signature. After a time (and with sufficient expertise), you can duplicate that signature. Of course, this only works at a distance. Once in visual range, the deception ends (since the signature is only a signal, and doesn't change the shape of your spaceship). Still, this is useful at times, especially for passing through the Ariel system without paying a toll (you need an Ariel cruiser signature to do this).

Aside from the robomaze, and selling excess equipment you don't need, money (needed for the usual accoutrements and situations) is obtained by smuggling. You pick up a cargo at the Mastassini space station, take it to its destination and drop it off. The more the job pays, usually the more dangerous the mission (someone is likely to shoot at you). Since Ciberan and Ariel happen to be at war, the Ciberan runs pay the most, and getting past the Ariel ships can be a bit nerve-wracking at times.

In between smuggling and robomaze workouts, other assignments from Starkiller will come your way. Ciberan/Ariel isn't the only dispute going on. The Lantas are at each other's throats over a philosophical difference. Strange things are happening at the Rouyn mining colony. Someone wants the dictator of Ariel assassinated so, from out of nowhere, alien invaders suddenly start flooding the system with warships. It's just another fun day in the life of a Starkiller merc.

The game is fairly linear, although some assignments overlap a bit, and there are times when you may have to drop what you're doing to go do something else. If you just take things as they come, and don't get ahead of yourself, you won't run into trouble. Events happen mainly by "triggers" rather than the passage of time, so if your party comes up against a situation too tough to handle, back off, build up skills and try again.

Conversation, especially Nova/Stark's, is rather on the snappy, wiseguy side, and held via choices from a menu. The bars are inhabited by a variety of weird and wonderful (and a few not-so-wonderful) denizens. Some just provide local color and the opportunity to have "fun chats" (such as the Zero-L merc in the Mastassini bar); others are very important. Talking to everyone (who isn't immediately hostile) is a must (not to mention an interesting experience, however you do it).

So is checking out every area to ensure you don't miss an important item, bit of information or neat weapon. Anything important will always show up on the floor as a small orange square; you must step on it to take the object.

Graphics are much improved over those in *Sentinel Worlds*. Gone are the agonizing movement system, the empty interiors and little green and red dots that represented people. Everything is now fully detailed, giving a better sense of being in a real place, and moving around is much faster.

Overall then, except for the awkward inventory handling and combat targeting, *Hard Nova* is a pretty decent game, with some interesting touches and a good storyline. While not a long-term epic, it should keep you occupied for awhile.

That's it for this look into the crystal ball. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028. **cgw**

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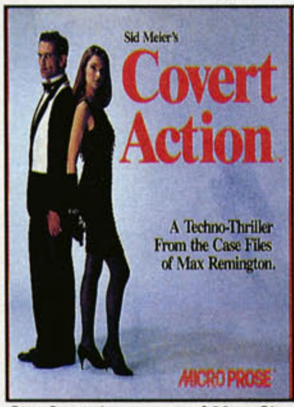


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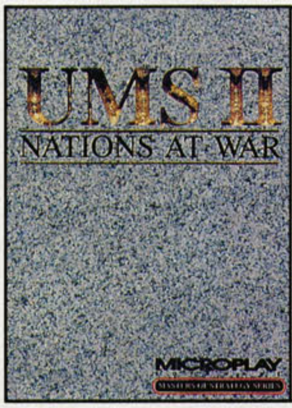
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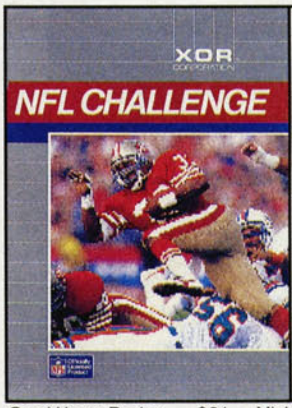
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'WORLDS AT WAR' by Lyric Software is a game of naval combat on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, you can play the tactical study for an hour; or the campaign game for a weekend. Features include random map generation, hidden movemnet, design your own task forces, capture palnets to build more units. **CGW** said "...like **EMPIRE**, what this game has is play-value". **$30**

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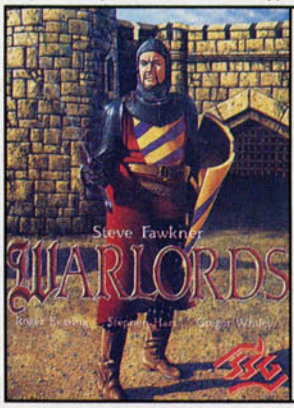
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VGA periscope view of enemy aircraft



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The Latest Scoop on *Command HQ*

Here are some of the latest notes compiled by the folks at ***Ozark Softscape****, the people who designed* Command HQ.

Latest Readme Notes

Dated December 10, 1990, here are the latest notes to add to the September 27, 1990 (initial release) version of *Command HQ*.

Corrections:

1) The solo opponent "SGT STAN STILL" is the same as "no solo opponent."

2) In the Control Summary Card, the key "CTRL-ALT-G" is assigned the function "Change Film to Game." This is true only when pressed *during a film*. If pressed during a solo game, the solo opponent is replaced with the next stronger opponent or reset to "SGT STAN STILL." Thus, players can adjust the strength of the solo opponent during play.

Additional Notes:

Port Conflicts: Since *Command HQ* uses both mouse and modem in very intimate ways, it may uncover port conflicts heretofore unknown. Anyone having mouse problems that happens to be using a Microsoft driver 6.0 or higher (or 100% compatible) may find that there is a port assignment problem. Make sure there are no extra serial ports or that no two of them are assigned the same number. (Port assignment problems can also cause the modem to fail to initialize).

Connect Problems: If the modem works in most cases but there is a problem in connecting with a particular opponent, try making the opposite connection (the dialer modem becomes the answer modem). If it still doesn't work, use another communication program (like Procomm) to make the connection first (use 1200 baud, 8 data bits, no parity). Then, exit the communication program without dropping the connection. Now, it is possible to start *CHQ* as though it were being played through a direct serial connection.

Model Constraints: Under certain methods of play, players have hit what were supposed to be "invisible" limits. The designers never expected players to regularly bump against these constraints — but, for the record, there is only enough memory allocated for: 100 total units (troops and ships); 30 total planes; and10 total satellites. If the message "too many units" appears, it means the limit has been hit and it is time to stop building and start fighting.

Recovering With Only One Side's Saved Game

For discussion, let's assume a player is unable to save a game that was disrupted for some reason, but his/her opponent *did* manage to save it. It is still possible to resume that game by following these steps:

1) Tell the opponent he/she can find the saved game in the \HQ\SAVE directory. It has the name CHQ-nn.SG where "nn" usually corresponds with the order in which games are listed in the save/resume game directory. Use this number or the date and time to pick which file seems to be the correct one. (For further confirmation, load the file into a text editor and, amidst all the weird characters, the saved game's name should show up — actually, it begins at the 6th byte and ends at the 25th).

2) Next, have the opponent send the saved game file using a file transfer program like ProComm or BitComm (the sender "uploads" and the receiver "downloads" the file).

3) Then, rename the file to a name that is not the same as any other file in the \HQ\SAVE subdirectory ("CHQ-99.SG" would probably work). Copy the renamed file into the \HQ\SAVE subdirectory.

4) Finally, start *Command HQ* and select RESUME SAVED GAME. Pick the file received from the opponent. Although it will be for the "wrong" side, one simply has to press CTRL-ALT-W to flip sides (back to the "right" side) when CONNECT OPTIONS is offered. Then, play normally.

Custom Unit Layouts

These notes explain how to do some fancy fooling around with the 1986 scenario. The default layouts for this scenario can be modified by using the LAYOUT ARMIES main option. This is true of both the solo and human sides of these wars.

1) The first step to modifying the initial layouts is to convert them into files that "LAYOUT ARMIES" will recognize. Copy the existing layouts to the \HQ\SAVE directory with this DOS command — "COPY \HQ\?QLAYOUT.2?? \HQ\SAVE" (the question marks must be filled in with information and are explained below). Next, the scenario designer can simply change the default directory to where the files were just copied ("CD \HQ\SAVE") and rename the files individually, as explained below.

The format for the files used as initial layouts for the scenarios is as follows: HQLAYOUT files are the human layouts and SQLAYOUT files are the solo layouts. The first digit of the extension name is the scenario ID (0=1918, 1=1942, 2=1986); the second digit is the "side" ID (0=blue, 1=red); the last digit is always 0.

The format for the files recognized by "LAYOUT ARMIES" is as follows: CHQ-nn.BLO are "Blue LayOuts;" CHQ-nn.RLO are "Red LayOuts;" the digits "nn" are unique ID numbers and need not be sequential since files are listed in *Command HQ* directories in "directory order" and not in "numeric order." For example, to make the solo 1986 red layout accessible to LAYOUT ARMIES use this DOS command — "REN SQLAYOUT.210 CHQ-01.RLO".

2) Modify the layouts using the LAYOUT ARMIES main option in *Command HQ*, being sure to select CUSTOM as the type of layout. LAYOUT ARMIES works like the "cold war" or "cease fire" in the 1986 scenario except that the player cannot give foreign aid or flip sides (since each side is laid out individually). One can use the special cheat key, CTRL-ALT-M, to give more money (or less money by "wrapping" past 150 billion) and the CTRL-ALT-K key to "kill" any unit currently "selected" (click on a unit to "select" it and press CTRL-ALT-K to "kill" it). Give initial attack plans to units by "double-clicking" on a unit and then setting its destination.

3) Rename the files and copy them back to the \HQ directory. The game will now use them as the default layouts. Use the formats given above. (It is possible to combine "rename" and "copy" by giving the destination file a new name. For instance, to update the solo 1986 red layout that was renamed in the above example, type — "COPY \HQ\SAVE\CHQ-01.RLO \HQ\SQLAYOUT.210").

Warning: Modifying the HQLAYOUT.nnn files means that it will be impossible to play against human opponents until either the modified files are presented to one's opponent or the original files are restored to their previous state (by re-copying them from the original floppy).

Special Note: Although it is theoretically possible to revise the default layouts for the 1918 and 1942 scenarios, it isn't recommended since the cities, oilfields and their ownership will be initially set for the 1986 scenario (which can cause some problems). However, if a player really wants to do some fancy footwork, it is possible to start a game with "STAN STILL" as the opponent, set the speed to 0, and use CTRL-ALT-M, CTRL-ALT-K and CTRL-ALT-W keys to set up both sides. Set the speed back up to make cities available, advance units and "change the borders" however desired. When satisfied, press ALT-S to save the game. Finally, when resuming this game, it is only necessary to press CTRL-ALT-G to "toggle" through the opponents to the level desired. (To make a two-player game, press CTRL-ALT-H while watching a film and use the notes in the previous section of this article to send the game to your opponent).

Latest Version Available

The latest version of *Command HQ* ("[V2]") is currently available directly from **Microprose**. This version has fixed a couple of minor bugs, and greatly enhances the artificial intelligence during solo play. The MARS GOD OF WAR opponent has been particularly strengthened to be more aggressive. To receive this latest version, players should send their original floppy disks directly to:

Microprose
Attention: Customer Service
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

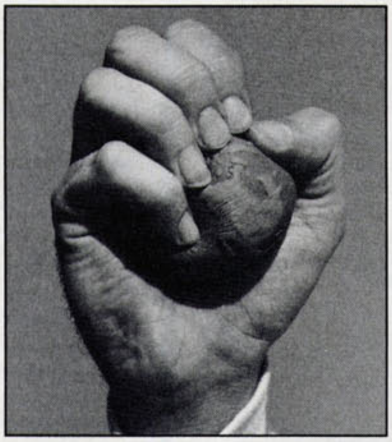
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Networks

Microprose *CHQ* tourney: (301) 771-1151.

Attention *Compuserve* users — Check out the Modem Games Forum for forums, roundtables and tournaments. Contact "Turk" at Compuserve address: 76576,1232.

For a good dogfight, you jet aces should contact Mike "moondawg" Weksler at Compuserve address: 76675,2207.

By Area Code

Seeking COMMAND HQ players in Southern California area. Call Alan Emrich at Home: (213) 420-7800 (Long Beach, CA). Be careful, I'm *very* experienced at this game!

Opponents wanted for COMMAND HQ, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY, MODEM WARS or FIRETEAM 2200. Silicon Valley area preferred (415, 408). Contact Jim Garrett at Home: (408) 248-3568 (Santa Clara, CA).

Seeking opponents for modem play of COMMAND HQ, F-16, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY and FALCON AT. Call Giacomo Cusumano at Home: (517) 265-2731 (Adrian, MI) or Work: (517) 423-7980.

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Experienced sub captain/flightleader seeks any opponent for 688 ATTACK SUB, POPULOUS or HELICOPTER SIMULATOR in 703, 202 or 301 area codes. Call me first at Home: (703) 491-9360 (Woodbridge, VA, ask for Sab). Also on Prodigy at: HVBR27A; PC-Link: Sab3.

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Taking Stock on Bond

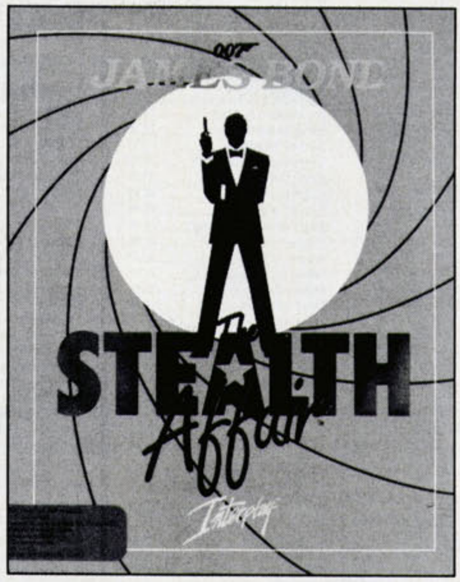
TITLE:	James Bond – The Stealth Affair
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DEVELOPER:	Delphine Software
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Santa Ana, CA

Interplay's James Bond — The Stealth Affair

by Allen L. Greenberg



"I am not dead. Nor have I been bludgeoned, perforated, ignited, dismembered, or offered up as piranha fodder. I have not even been made the victim of some malicious, sardonic wit. Therefore, I conclude, I must be in the wrong town." This, we may theorize, is a sample of the deductive reasoning process belonging to Bond... *James* Bond. He is the hero in *James Bond – The Stealth Affair*, an action-adventure game distributed by **Interplay Productions**, but he is certainly no addition to the line of deep-thinking "Sherlock Clones" who have appeared in other computer mysteries.



The Stealth Affair (wherein the purchaser has been granted a non-exclusive software "License to Kill") is **Delphine Software**'s follow-up to their immensely entertaining *Future Wars*. As reported in earlier issues of *Computer Gaming World*, the *Stealth Affair* program arrived in the US *sans* Bond for distribution by Interplay. It was Interplay's decision that the mission would best be handled by agent 007, rather than some generic super-spy. Their decision was appropriate. This is not a mystery to be solved, but rather, *survived*. In the spirit of the Bond films, *Stealth* requires the player to master several action sequences in order to complete his mission. There are, however, many conventional puzzles to be unraveled as well and the program includes a few non-interactive animated episodes.

The story, presented in the standard, two-dimensional animated format, tracks Bond's efforts to reclaim a stolen killer aircraft known as the Stealth Bomber. Evidence points toward a small Latin American country and its enigmatic dictator. Before the game is complete, Bond will come to blows with members of the KGB (apparently putting in overtime here in the US) and the leader of a secret terrorist organization. To aid him, this byte-size Bond has access to gadgetry of the same breed as the standard fare in his films. While this equipment is necessary to complete the adventure, its improper use will likely result in life-terminating complications.

The player manipulates 007 and interacts with the story using Delphine Software's "Cinematique" game system. This is a no-typing, menu-driven interface which has been improved upon since its debut in Delphine's *Future Wars*. The player may now freely examine and operate the items listed in his inventory. Nevertheless, the awkward command structure of the system remains — "Operate girl" is *not* a request to remove a woman's appendix. The actual result of this command, and others like it, are dependant on the circumstances in which it is given.

Another disconcerting feature of Cinematique is that it often requires players to engage in a search for a pixel-in-a-haystack. Although less often than in *Future Wars*, there are times when the game will not progress until the player manages to find some nearly invisible object by passing the cross-hair cursor directly over its location on the screen.

As to the aforementioned action sequences, each adventure game epicurean must sooner or later decide just how much dodging, chasing or shooting can be peppered amongst a platter of story-solving before it actually takes away from one's enjoyment. *Stealth Affair* contains several such episodes in which 007 must become a sort of Pac-Man. None of these are exceedingly difficult. However, arcade-loathing secret agents should be aware that they will be shaken, and perhaps a bit stirred....

When *Future Wars* first appeared, a problem with the program's off-disk copy-protection shortly became obvious. The user was required to match colors and patterns between the screen and the documentation. Unfortunately, the two sources only loosely resembled each other. With *Stealth Affair*, this problem has been admirably addressed. The requirements are still the same, but the objects to be identified are now clearly marked and legitimate users should experience no difficulty accessing the program. A representative from Interplay has even indicated that color-blind users may contact the company to obtain a special version of the program which does not cause a problem for those so impaired.

Stealth Affair is a competently written and programmed piece of work. Unfortunately, very little of it is particularly memorable. The graphics and animation, while not lacking in nuance or detail, contain none of the eye-popping imagery displayed in *Future Wars*. Likewise, the strong background music quickly begins to resemble unrequested noise from the neighbor's stereo which is more distracting than enjoyable.

Finally, the plot, the central story of the Stealth Bomber itself, has very little to do with the puzzles and arcade sequences which it links together. What seems to be missing from *Stealth Affair* is a dash of inspiration. It was present in *Future Wars* and can only be described as that same quality which makes a novel a "page turner." The game is just too easy to put down only partly completed, with the player feeling not terribly concerned with what might have happened next.

James Bond – The Stealth Affair is certainly not a game without merit, but it is, unfortunately, somewhat of a disappointment. The Cinematique system deserves to be used in future releases and its creators at Delphine have likewise proved themselves no second-rate artists and story-tellers. Next time out, perhaps the results will better reflect the talent behind them. **CGW**



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Circle Reader Service #13

See Reader Input Device on page 79

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

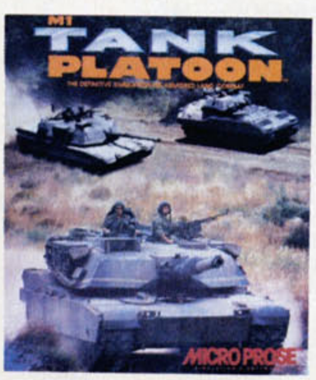
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*78*	*10.69*
2.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*AC,SI*	*102*	*10.40*
3.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicProse*	*ST*	*75*	*10.38*
4.	*Wizardry:Bane/Forge*	*Sir-Tech*	*RP*	*24*	*9.71*
5.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*ST,SI*	*123*	*9.67*
6.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*RP*	*69*	*9.64*
7.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicProse*	*SI,WG*	*70*	*9.60*
8.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*71*	*9.59*
9.	*Wings*	*Cnmaware*	*AC*	*31*	*9.44*
10.	*Silent Service II*	*MicProse*	*SI*	*45*	*9.41*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	MechWarrior	Activision	SI,ST	52	9.29
12.	Quest for Glory II: Trial By Fire	Sierra	AD,RP	22	9.23
13.	Populous	EA	ST	115	9.13
14.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	AD,RP	54	9.12
15.	Red Storm Rising	MicProse	SI	74	9.09
16.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
17.	Ultima V	Origin	RP	95	9.03
18.	Command HQ	Microplay	ST	46	9.01
19.	Wasteland	EA	RP	119	9.01
20.	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	AC,ST	53	9.01
21.	Second Front	SSI	WG	37	9.00
22.	Secret of Monkey Island	Lucasfilm	AD	26	8.97
23.	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	45	8.97
24.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
25.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	ST,RP	31	8.96
26.	Overrun	SSI	WG	24	8.93
27.	Falcon	SpcHolo	SI	62	8.90
28.	Starflight 2	EA	RP	63	8.87
29.	NFL Challenge	XOR	ST	86	8.87
30.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
31.	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	29	8.86
32.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	RP	43	8.81
33.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	43	8.80
34.	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
35.	Project Stealth Ftr	MicProse	SI	29	8.79
36.	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	AD	47	8.77
37.	Bard's Tale III	EA	RP	54	8.77
38.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	AC	74	8.76
39.	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	28	8.75
40.	Jack Nick Unlimited	Accolade	ST	26	8.73
	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	30	8.73
42.	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	62	8.72
	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	29	8.71
	Action Stations	CnflctAnlytic	WG	22	8.71
45.	Secret of Slvr Blades	SSI	RP	47	8.70
	Nuclear War	New World	ST	41	8.70
	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	33	8.70
48.	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	MicProse	SI	58	8.69
49.	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	43	8.67
	Sword of the Samurai	MicProse	ST,RP	40	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	70	8.67
52.	Zany Golf	EA	AC	31	8.65
	Ishido	Accolade	ST	28	8.65
	Indy-Graphic	Lucasfilm	AD	29	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	ST	44	8.65

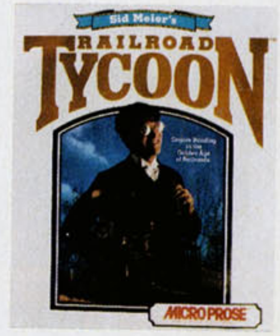
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The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

Bard's Tale I
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Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	20	8.65
57.	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	37	8.64
58.	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	36	8.62
59.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	116	8.61
60.	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	65	8.60
61.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	58	8.59
62.	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	30	8.56
63.	It Came From Desert	Cnmware	AD	36	8.54
	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	34	8.54
65.	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	24	8.53
66.	Carrier Command	MicroPlay	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	AC	29	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	68	8.51
69.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	31	8.42
70	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	AC,ST	50	8.39
71.	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	AC	52	8.38
72.	Strike Fleet	EA	WG	79	8.37
73.	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	30	8.34
74.	Battletech: Revenge	Infocom	WG,RP	42	8.33
75.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	AC,AD	75	8.32
76.	Modem Wars	EA	ST	24	8.29
	Police Quest II	Sierra	AD	39	8.29
	TV Sports Basketball	Cnmwre	AC,ST	33	8.29
79.	688 Attack Sub	EA	SI,ST	59	8.27
	Drakkhen	Data East	RP	32	8.27
80.	Flight of Intruder	SpecHolo	SI	25	8.26
81.	Manhunter	Sierra	AD	72	8.25
82.	Centurion	EA	ST	49	8.24
83.	Police Quest	Sierra	AD	98	8.23
84.	Battlechess II	Interplay	ST	20	8.22
85	Starglider II	Rainbird	AC	65	8.22
86.	Jack Nick 18 Holes	Accolade	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	AC	68	8.21
88.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	AD	52	8.20
89.	Loom	LucasFilm	AD	38	8.18
90.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	AC,SI	31	8.16
91.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	AD	28	8.14
92.	Tetris	SpcHolo	AC,ST	46	8.13
93.	Conquests of Camelot	Sierra	AD	33	8.12
	Vette!	SpcHolo	AC	26	8.12
96.	Knights of Legend	Origin	RP	26	8.08
97.	Speedball	Cnmware	AC	35	8.06
98.	Russia	SSG	WG	61	8.05
99.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	RP	71	8.04
100.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	ST,RP	39	8.03

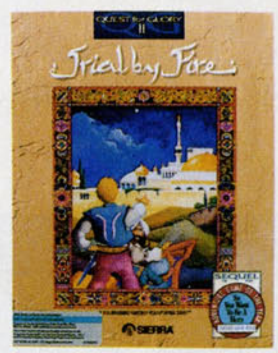
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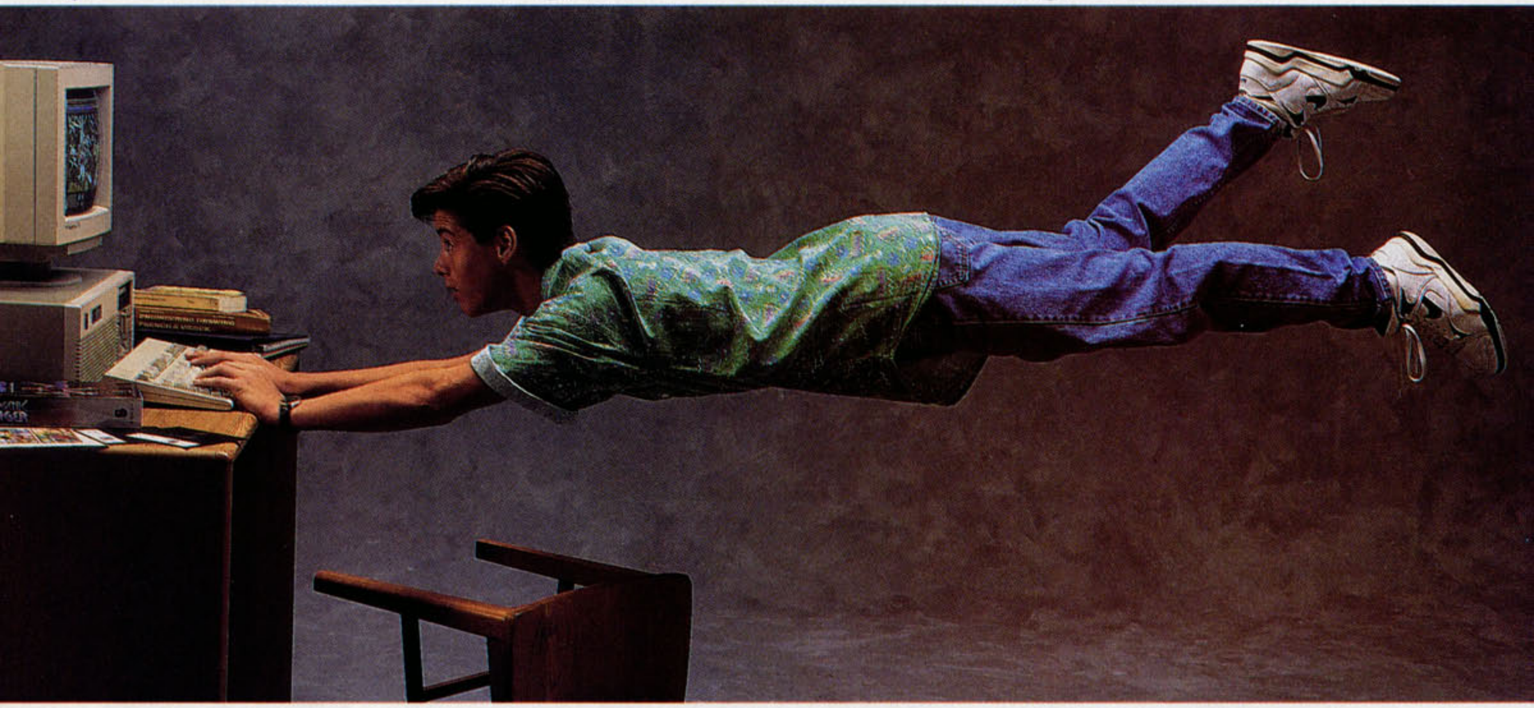
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Circle Reader Service #50

Current Events 101

What's Happening in the "Computer Gaming World"

The computer gaming world has experienced considerable seismic activity since the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. At CES, industry insiders chatted about unconfirmed rumors of a "hostile takeover" of **Mediagenic**, a possible acquisition of **Cinemaware** by larger corporate entities, a possible merger for **Virgin Mastertronic** and new publishing partnerships with overseas firms announced by **Accolade, Konami** and **Spectrum HoloByte**.

The **Mediagenic** "takeover" was of particular concern. Some perceived the acquisition of more than 20% of the corporation's common stock as indicative of major management changes, while others perceived the move as friendly toward current management. Within weeks, industry watchers were to learn the answer. Bruce Davis was to step aside as Chief Executive Officer (while remaining as a member of the board of directors), while Robert A. Kotick (principal shareholder in **BHK Technologies Corp.**, the company which made the major purchase in **Mediagenic** stock) was to become the new Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. Fears that the new shareholder might intend to strip **Mediagenic** of its assets were allayed when part of the agreement to change corporate management included a potential credit line of up to five million dollars. **BHK**'s statement of intent, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, indicates that the new management is committed to producing computer games and provides welcome assurance that **Mediagenic** will continue to publish game software.

Meanwhile, **Cinemaware** was allegedly being considered for acquisition by entertainment companies involved in both software publishing and film production. Any of these acquisitions would seem like an excellent move. Unfortunately, **Cinemaware** was perceived by prospective suitors to be under-capitalized and unlikely to turn around its relatively poor recent quarterly performances in the short term. Thus, in a move intended to save the company as, at least, a developer, the company laid off 43 employees (lowering their current total to 14). Contrary to early rumors, the company is *not* planning to file for protection under bankruptcy laws as they are current with outside obligations. The company's goal is to license and develop their products rather than continuing as a publisher. **Cinemaware** is expected to fulfil its obligation to provide NEC products like *TV Sports: Hockey* and *It Came From The Desert*, as well as its obligation to Commodore to deliver *TV Sports: Football* for the CDTV system. Consumers will still be able to purchase the finished products from **Electronic Arts Distribution**.

In more positive news, both **Konami** and **Spectrum HoloByte** have entered into publishing partnerships with Britain's **Mirrorsoft**. **Spectrum HoloByte**'s new line of imports will be called **Arena Entertainment** and will include: *Cadaver* (an adventure game by the Bit Map Brothers), *Reach for the Skies* (a Battle of Britain game developed by Rowan Software) and *Red Phoenix* (based on the Larry Bond novel).

Konami just released *Back to the Future II* and *Theme Park Mystery*, both developed in association with **Mirrorsoft**'s established **Image Works** line. In addition, **Konami** will establish a publishing partnership with another European software house, **Gremlin Graphics**. **Gremlin Graphics** previously produced *Lotus* (a Formula I auto racing game) and *BSS Jane Seymour* (an adventure game set on a spaceship).

Accolade has announced a new distribution agreement with **U.S. Gold**. The agreement allows **Accolade** to market titles like *International Soccer* (*Italy, 1990* in Europe, this seems to be Europe's idea of what *TV Sports: Soccer* should be), *Gold of the Aztecs* (an action/adventure with 80 screens of action and logic puzzles), *Vaxine* (*Harmony* with a faster pace), and *Rotox* (an action game with cyborg warriors where the action seems like *Centipede* meets *Zaxxon* in a zero-gravity *Marble Madness* world).

Finally, at press time, **Virgin Mastertronic** revealed that it was about to merge with a U.S. software corporation. The identity of the East Coast company had not been confirmed at press time, but it is believed that the two companies will consolidate their operations in order to provide for more efficient overhead.

Between Iraq and a Hard Place (Simulations)

Naturally, the world of simulations is dominated by a focus on modern combat. **Microprose** will reprise two of their most successful titles in new incarnations. *Gunship 2000* could possibly be considered *Gunship* meets *M-1 Tank Platoon*. The new version not only boasts 256 color VGA graphics throughout the game and full sound support, but it has literally been redesigned from the ground up. The game demands squadron action and offers a variety of squadrons to work with, is more mission-oriented than the earlier game and features both European and Desert scenarios.

Meanwhile, *F-117A Nighthawk* is expected to be to *F-19 Stealth Fighter* what *Silent Service II* was to the classic *Silent Service*. Not only have the graphics and documentation been updated, but the flight model has been revised to more accurately reflect the

reality of the *F-117A* and specific Iraqi scenarios have been added.

Alert readers will ask a very good question about *MegaFortress* from **Three-Sixty**. "If the game is based on Dale Brown's best-selling novel, *Flight of the Old Dog*, why does it have Iraqi scenarios? After all, the book doesn't have any." See the Sneak Preview on page 16 of this issue for the answer.

Falcon 3.0 may be **Spectrum HoloByte**'s masterpiece of all time. In addition to the editing capabilities and multimedia aspects noted last issue, innovations in this program include: the use of an anti-aliasing chip in cooperation with a math co-processor in order to get crisp, clear images, even in a polygon-filled environment; support of an upcoming sound board which will allow directional sound cues with earphones; and authentic terrain based on U.S.A.F. terrain maps with actual heights and depths as recorded on those documents. Finally, the program uses every unclassified aspect of the F-16C with every possible unclassified armament.

Those who are not concerned about current events may find themselves more interested in **Activision**'s *Death or Glory*. Self-styled as the "Time-Life Books" approach to aircraft simulation, *Death or Glory* offers 76 years of air combat. The game will feature twelve pre-designed missions covering six different eras: World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Falklands and Syria (1982). The missions are historically based and enable players to compare their performance with actual historical results at the conclusion of each sortie. European-based **Vektor Graphics** developed the game using ellipses to shape the polygon-filled graphics into more identifiable shapes than the typical polygon technology. Also, they developed some "What if?" capabilities where F-16s could fight Fokkers or Harriers could challenge Spitfires. The aerodynamic model was developed by the company in conjunction with their *Space Shuttle* simulation being prepared for **Virgin Mastertronic**.

The *Space Shuttle* program features everything in real-time. The VAB roll-out, launch, orbit and landing (complete with eleven different missions) are all as authentic as possible. NASA cooperated so well with the product that it was difficult to distill the material down from the 800 page flight manual and other esoteric publications. This simulation promises to be the one for a person who wants the ultimate detail, but it features several help functions that move the game along or help players with the more difficult aspects of the game.

The simulation scene is filled out with two similar style automobile racing games: *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* from **Electronic Arts** and *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge* from **Konami**. Both feature replays from multiple perspectives, considerable technical consultation from racing celebrities, smooth action and beautiful graphics. *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* features a role-playing aspect patterned after Mario's career. Players try to obtain sponsors and work their way up through six different circuits, driving six different types of cars. *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge* spends much more time in having the player set up the car and features eight different tracks and three different NASCAR-approved cars (see "Taking A Peek" in this issue).

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Active Imagination (Action)

Naturally, the world of film is still considered to offer some of the most fertile ground in designing action games. **Bethesda Softworks** has tapped into that genre for *The Terminator*. This action game follows the film script almost verbatim and allows the player to walk, fly and drive through the terrifying future as either the Terminator himself or as Reese. Those who dislike linear games *can* disregard the storyline, however, and simply move into death and destruction mode. In something of the same vein, **Ocean** is following the script fairly carefully with its long-awaited *The Untouchables* action game, complete with shoot-out in Union Station, Chicago.

Of course, no one should be surprised that **Walt Disney Software** is producing action versions of their hit films. *Arachnophobia* is an action/strategy game based on the movie. Due to be released in the late third quarter, the game features seven levels representing seven different towns and players take on a search and destroy mission to get rid of the killer spiders and their eggs before they get the player's on-screen persona. Players choose different weapons and there are fourteen different attack patterns which the spider "villains" might use against them.

Dick Tracy is the late second quarter release from the software division. The graphics are somewhat reminiscent of **Ocean**'s *Batman: The Movie* game (distributed in the U.S. by **Data East**), only with smaller figures. Interestingly enough, however, the design team has elected to focus on the *Dick Tracy* of the 1940s radio series and comic books rather than the Warren Beatty approach to the hero. The program generates hundreds of random crimes throughout the fictional city and Tracy's job is to stop them and capture the bad guys.

Accolade has always been synonymous with action games and 1991 will be no exception. Their new agreement with **U.S. Gold** will guarantee a steady flow of European-designed action titles, plus they will be unveiling three action releases on the **Sega Genesis**: *Star Control*, a version of *Hardball* that is closer to the original than *Hardball II* (featuring a seven game World Series rather than league play) and a European shoot-'em-up with 3-D Parallax scrolling called *Onslaught*.

In addition, **Accolade**'s *Hovercraft* will combine elements of arcade-style games, three-dimensional simulations and adventure. The fiction pits the player as an agent in a futuristic drug war. The agent "drives" a hovercraft through urban environments looking for a drug called "Aftershock" and attempts to both destroy the drugs and pick up new weapons/equipment to improve his vehicle.

In **Software Toolworks**' *D-Generation* (working title), the futuristic world finds itself in danger from a biological laboratory where mutations are rampant and everything has gone awry (something like the old *HMS Pandora's Box* boardgame). The player travels through 150-200 rooms in this first quarter release and observes the progress of his/her "sterilization" campaign from an oblique 3/4 perspective.

Speaking of action games with something of a scientific twist, **Psygnosis** is

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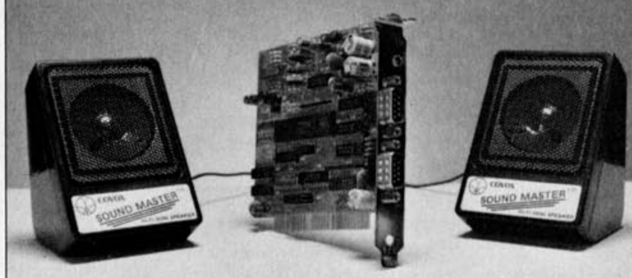
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readying *Atomino* for late first quarter release on both the Amiga and IBM. *Atomino* is a real-time challenge in which players build molecules almost *Tetris*-style from atoms with distinctive electron patterns. **Data East** offers a similar product, called *Continuum*, which has just been released (see "Taking A Peek").

Sequels are also fertile seed beds for developing action games. **California Dreams** has decided to one-up themselves with *Street Rod II*. The new version of their action/strategy hit will feature a new decade, new cars and new types of races. The goal of the game and basic system will still be the same, but the graphics are enhanced and a construction set has been added. **Access** is preparing *Cartel*, a *Crime Wave*-style adventure as their primary second quarter action release. Also, as noted in last issue's "Rumor Bag," *Wing Commander 2* is being readied to follow in the footsteps of its number one rated predecessor.

Sports titles also fulfil part of the action gamer's fantasy life. **Cinemaware** is attempting to develop *TV Sports: Roller-Babes* as a complement to their *TV Sports* series of games. This roller derby game features a sleazy announcer, those classic interview segments and four male/four female teams. Also, **Cinemaware** is developing *TV Sports: Hockey* for **NEC** (described in last issue's report) and **UbiSoft** has just released *Pro Tennis Tour 2* (both described in last issue's article).

Finally, **Psygnosis** is attempting to create a new line of action games with three "cartoon" products. The first of the series to be unveiled is *Lemmings*. This game features an obstacle course for one or two players in which the object is to rescue the dumb lemmings before they end up falling off the screen.

Strategic Intervention (Strategy)

Perhaps, one of the most original games unveiled at the show is scheduled to be published by **California Dreams**. Entitled *Solidarity*, this political simulation was Polish-designed and programmed. Coming in the early second quarter, this game of Eastern European politics allows players to organize a political party, develop activists to be developed according to use, plan legal activities (speeches, strikes, passing leaflets, etc.), and authorize illegal activities (jamming television signals, using a radio and setting up printing presses). Time, personnel and resource management unite with political acumen to create a fascinating challenge.

Another strategy game that presents some different challenges has just been released from **PC Globe**. *Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships and Dodo Eggs* is a global scavenger hunt. Players travel the globe from destination to destination, seeking exotic treasure like those described in the game's title. Since each destination point has six different departure points, the goal of the game's designers was that a player would never play the same game twice.

Of course, in addition to being a staple of the action game environment, sports games are vital to the strategy world. *Earl Weaver Baseball II* will not only feature significantly improved graphics and the editor features described in the last issue, but also a computer manager which players design themselves (using a 60 question quiz), ability to download statistics from the *USA Today* network, enhanced sound and an extended (40 man) roster. The product might even feature salaries and salary limits, but this had not been determined at press time.

Earl Weaver II developer **Mirage Graphics** has also been working with **Bethesda Softworks**. As yet untitled, the college basketball game will feature a player editor to customize teams, capacity for "coaching on the fly" from a pre-set playbook and, for pure strategy players, a "Coach Only" mode.

This Means War (Wargames)

A subset of strategy games is the declining genre of wargames. This year, **Broderbund** is offering a hybrid action/wargame in *Ancient Art of War in the Skies*. The Murry brothers have redesigned the *Ancient Art of War* system to integrate air and ground battles. Players can edit campaigns (deciding on such matters as bomber construction, repair rates for both the offensive and defensive sides, and flight range) and use a map twice as large as those in previous *Ancient Art of War* games. Actual combat takes place in action sequences that, for fighter combat, look something like *Wings of Fury*. There are two new types of sequences for bomber gunners and bombardiers, however. The action sequences are designed to reflect the *average* plane of World War I, however, and *not* any specific plane. The campaign game is interesting because the front line is dynamic and moves back and forth depending upon the player's prowess as a pilot.

As noted last issue, **Mindcraft** will release a real-time castle defense game called *Siege*. However, the company will also release *Rules of Engagement* in the late second quarter. This is the ship-to-ship tactical space combat game developed by **Omnitrend** that is intended to use the *IGS: Interlocking Game System*. Space vessels slug it out using *Rules of Engagement* until one ship's crew is ready to board the other ship. Then, players can save the game and use *Breach 2* to resolve the man-to-man combat. If a player does *not* have *Breach 2*, the computer will resolve the boarding sequence automatically.

In addition, **Mindcraft** plans to include a powerful editor in their next two **Omnitrend** products. Players will be able to design alien races, fleet commanders, captains, ships, races, systems and missions. The second product, *Mercenaries*, will be similar to *Breach 2*, but will allow alien mercenaries and *every* character will be handled like the squad leaders alone have been updated in the *Breach* series to this point.

Koei Corporation plans to market *Romance of the Three Kingdoms II* on the IBM PC in June and *Bandit Kings of Ancient China* on the **Nintendo** immediately. The former will be their first PC program with sound board support and, if it is anything like *Nobunaga's Ambition II*, should feature significantly improved graphics and artificial intelligence. In the fourth quarter, **Koei**'s Napoleonic game, *L'Empereur*, is due. It will integrate politics, economics and military strategy into another historical challenge from **Koei**. Alas, the company suggested that their *World War II in the Pacific* game may not arrive by December 7, 1991 as originally expected.

Strategic Simulations was not showing any of their *Revolution '76*-style American Civil War game at CES or their *Medieval Lords*. Both should provide great interest. **Three-Sixty** informed *CGW* that they are working on a land-based version of *Harpoon*. The boardgame gurus (and authors of the *Desert Shield Factbook*), **Game Designers Workshop** will assist in the design of the new *Harpoon* game.

The world of wargames is sparse, but not quite forgotten.

Role Out The Peril (Role-Playing)

Although best known for its wargames, **Koei** will unveil a new direction in 1991. Called "ReKoeition" games, hybrid

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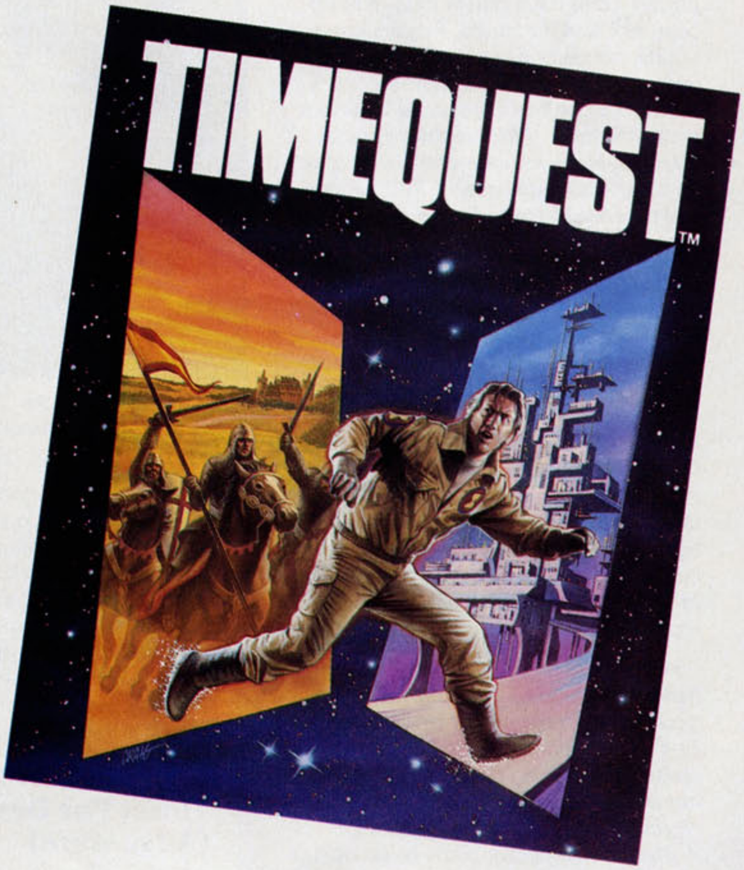
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EGA graphics shown above. Actual screens may vary.

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products like *The Big Voyage* will further blur the divisions between strategy, wargame, adventure and role-playing. This icon-driven challenge is expected during the fourth quarter of 1991.

Origin's *Martian Dreams* sounds like a mesmerizing CRPG for anyone interested in history. Players meet historical figures like Freud, Rasputin, Lenin, Peary, Edison, Carnegie and Curie. It is not immediately obvious whether one has to kill Rasputin the Mad Monk in order to win this game (good luck if it is!), but it is certain that *Martian Dreams* is the first "Ultima" in which a player can actually lose. In addition to historical figures, the plot features belated tributes to cinematic geniuses like Fritz Lang (*Metropolis*) and Georges Melies (*A Trip to the Moon*).

Space opera is the vehicle for **New World**'s *Planet's Edge*, as well. Sixty different worlds populate this fictional universe and each one is unique in appearance and life forms. Players can customize the party's exploration vessels, as well as their personal equipment. *Planet's Edge* has a beautiful look to it (with 256 color VGA graphics) and allows players to choose whether to play as a pure strategy-based CRPG or as a real-time action/role-playing game.

Sequels have always had a vital place in the role-playing genre. As noted last issue, **Mindcraft**'s *The Magic Candle II* features a number of new features. Another sequel, **New World**'s *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra* builds on the famous system with new features like: detailed portrait icons of the characters, the largest three-dimensional viewing window for on-screen action, cinematic sequences to enhance the game's pacing, additional magic spells and new character classes. Perhaps most importantly, *Might & Magic III* was designed to be replayable.

Strategic Simulations continues to enhance the value of its *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* line. In addition to *Eye of the Beholder*, the beautifully crafted first person perspective role-playing experience and *Death Knights of Krynn*, the sequel to *Champions of Krynn*, the company plans to go on-line (**America On-Line**) with a multi-player version of these graphically resplendent CRPGs.

Finally, as described last issue, *Darklands* from **Microprose** will use an authentic map of Medieval Germany (A.D. 1400-1500) and a magic system based on what the people of that era believed was true to develop a rich "fantasy" world. The game will feature, at least, 100 saints to pray to (reflecting "religious" perceptions of the supernatural) and 100 alchemical potions (reflecting "occult" and pseudo-scientific perceptions of magic). *Darklands* should combine the strengths of **Microprose**'s design staff's historical expertise with their personal role-playing experience, providing a potentially fascinating product.



Lord Vader: "You will be sure to review our Star Wars *game in the near future...." Editor-in-Chief Sipe: "Uh, well, there are just so many games..."*



Editor-in-Chief Sipe: "...urk...but we'll be sure to cover this one."

Thirst For Danger (Adventure)

Aficionados of adventure have nothing to worry about in 1991. **Sierra** plans to release six titles. In addition to *Space Quest IV* and **Dynamix**'s *Heart of China* (originally scheduled for late 1990), the company expects to reprise the polyester protagonist in *Leisure Suit Larry 5* and the long arm of the law in *Police Quest III*. Fans of 1990's *Conquests of Camelot* can anticipate the same basic treatment given to Sherlock Forest in *Conquests of the Long Bow*. In addition to announced titles, a second "Laura Bow" mystery is in the early stages.

A new project from Jeff Tunnell of **Dynamix** has been announced. Entitled *The Adventures of Willie Beamish* and described as a "light and colorful story about a nine-year-old and his quest to get to the World Video Game Championships," this adventure promises to be more than "Leave It To Beaver" in the 1990s. *CGW* will print more details on this groundbreaking project as they become available.

Legend Software's *TimeQuest* appears to be a fascinating adventure in which players visit six different cities across a time span of three thousand years in order to save the world. Players encounter Moses, Cleopatra, Charlemagne, King John, Genghis Khan, Sir Francis Drake and host of other famous dead dudes as they chase the ultimate bad guy through time, bravely attempting to undo his dastardly deeds. The designer assures us that players will not have to know a lot of history in order to succeed. They might *learn* some, but they do not have to know it.

Interplay is importing yet another **Delphine Software** product with *Cruise for a Corpse*, a tribute to Agatha Christie in a period piece set in the 1920s. One major improvement in this adventure over **Delphine**'s previous efforts is that the interface now allows players to *question* non-player characters.

Capstone has licensed a summer movie for their next adventure game. The company believes *The Taking of Beverly Hills* will be 1991's *Die Hard* and they are doing their best to move away from the company's arcade-oriented products in order to create a true adventure game.

Finally, as noted last issue, **Accolade**'s *Conspiracy: The Deadlock Files*, a murder mystery/intrigue adventure, and **Cinemaware**'s *The Enemy Within*, an interactive police "buddy" picture, will use multi-media effects to tell their stories.

Settling Down

No matter how severe the quakes were that sent shivers through the "computer gaming world" over the last few weeks, the upshot is that there is plenty of exciting new product on its way to our readers. We do hope things will settle down for a few weeks, though. We could use the peace and quiet. **cgw**



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Return To A World of Loyalty and Honor




Opening Screen


Making an Alliance


Battlefield

Nobunaga's Ambition II, a best seller in Japan, is now available for IBM PC/Compatibles and Nintendo!

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- Two scenarios, five levels of difficulty.
- 1 to 4 players
- 38 unique battlemaps and castles.
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- New HEX battle features Night and Siege warfare.
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A Passionate Tryst with Speed

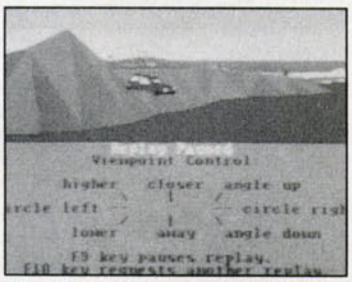
Accolade's Test Drive III: The Passion

By David M. Wilson

Screaming down the highway at over 200 mph, I heard the first panicky beep of the radar detector. The squealing tone warned that radar was operating somewhere nearby. When the second L.E.D. lit up I was faced with the choice of slowing down or trying to outrun the "County Mounties." It took less than two seconds to decide to run for it. After all, even if the vigilant Smokey caught me, this would be one ticket that would not *affect my insurance premium.*

Accolade's *Test Drive III: The Passion* is a foray into the battle of the speed demons. The player buckles up and competes in an epic road race from the Pacific Coast to Yosemite National Park. (Keep the gas tank full, because **Accolade** promises that additional courses and cars will be available.)

There are three great "fantasy" cars, fresh from the drawing board to the player's monitor. The Lamborghini Diablo jumps from 0-62 mph in a quick 4.1 seconds, utilizes a V-12, has a top speed of 202 mph and costs a *mere* $200,000. The Pininfarina is based on the Ferrari 12-cylinder, zips from 0-60 mph in 6.2 seconds, has a top speed of 180 mph, and cost a paltry(?) $2,516,250. On the domestic front, Chevrolet offers the CERV III (Corporate Experimental Research Vehicle III). This American beauty boasts a 4-cam, 32-valve zr-1 v-8 engine fortified with Garrett T3 turbochargers and intercoolers (the practical meaning of which is that the first two cars only *seemed* fast). The CERV III rockets from 0-60 mph in an impressive 3.9 seconds and has a top speed of 225 mph. The list price is estimated at $400,000. Like a car owner's manual, the game manual takes the space to describe each of these wonder cars in careful detail.



Test Drive III is an interesting mix in a game. The 3-D, polygon-filled play screens aren't exceptionally beautiful, but are certainly playable and "realistic" enough. One nice touch (of "chrome?") is the fact that bugs splatter on the windshields of the car (with an important departure from reality in that *real* insects don't swish off with one easy pass of the windshield wipers). The EGA graphics lose some of the "flash" of the VGA title screens, but, in general, the playing screens in EGA do not seem substantially different from the VGA ones.

One complaint relating to the graphics might be the "stupid" cows. The cud-chewing beasts just stand in the road, expecting those expensive sports cars to go around them. They never budge!

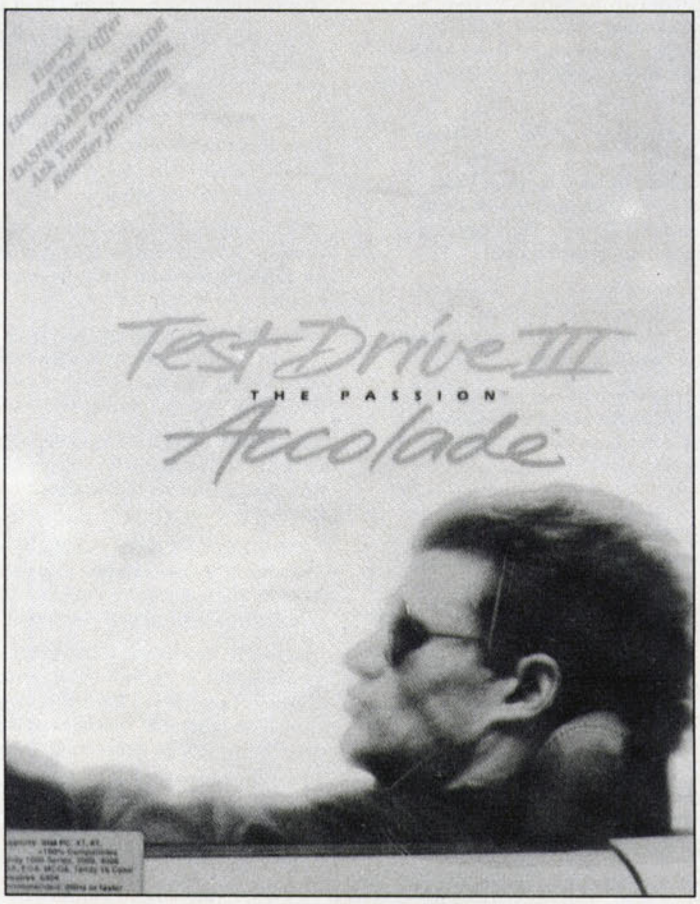
When cruising (racing?) around the beautiful California countryside, players must be aware that the cops only have to get close enough to the car to take a picture of its license plate to "nail" someone. This begs the question, "Is that fair?" How do they know it wasn't the owner's spouse or kid driving? (Like anyone would *really* let them behind the wheel of his Lamborghini.) Oddly, one would think that the Accolade programmers would know that the California Highway Patrol doesn't use radar except in a few experimental situations. (Don't these people ever speed to work?)

Assuming the player opts for a rather exciting chase when the police are in the rearview mirror, if the cops get too close in their pursuit, a viable option is to just drive off the road until they go by. Players can even hide in some of the barns along the way. Be careful not run over the "stone(d?)" cows or the wrong party in that accident will end up hamburger.

This reviewer was disappointed that there was no hot-key for a horn (after all, most people like to blow their horn in long tunnels). To make matters a bit worse, reaching the hot-keys was somewhat difficult while driving down the road. Why not just use the "W" key for wipers and the "H" key for headlights? Hitting CTRL-W takes more hands than a person doing 185 mph can safely spare.

The most interesting aspect of the game is the increasingly standard instant replay mode. After a crash, players can control a camera which views the latest catastrophe from varying views and angles (ever see *Red Asphalt* in traffic school?).

TITLE:	Test Drive III: The Passion
SYSTEM:	IBM (8 MHz or faster)
# PLAYERS:	1-4
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Tom Loughry
DISTRIBUTOR:	Accolade San Jose, CA



Test Drive III offers a player nine levels of driving skills. As in the previous games, the beginning levels allow the computer to do the shifting, but the tougher levels provide extra shifting, traffic and damage. The upshot is that lower levels allow more leeway for "fantasy" driving. Thus, on the easier levels, a player could drive on the sides of hills to some degree without tearing up or rolling the car. Although *Test Drive III* is *not* primarily an "off road" simulator, most players become highly amused checking out the vast countryside areas built into this game.

For players who wind up "off road" (where it is easy to get frustratingly lost), hitting the F6 key immediately returns the vehicle safely to the road. A final note: Players who go the wrong way down the highway will not be able to read the (occasionally important) road signs.

While a fine driving simulator (particularly the "off road" aspects, oddly enough), it is not a "wow" that will knock a player's racing gloves off. However, *Test Drive III* is a well-designed package that does its best to emulate real driving conditions with an emphasis on "power machine fantasy." Since this is as close as most people are likely to get to actually *driving* these exotic cars, this will be the game's main appeal to many. **caw**

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"Sim" plifying *SimEarth*

Some Hints On Improving Game Play

by Stanley R. Trevena

"It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts."
— Henry David Thoreau



SimEarth is the much-anticipated next step in the **Maxis** line of systems simulation software. It is not a sequel to *SimCity*, and any player who approaches it as such will be disappointed. *SimEarth* is a global biosphere simulation that allows the player to experiment, explore and discover the intricate interrelationships of the various systems that make up a planet's ecosystem. The player can choose to take a planet from formation to civilization, or start anywhere in between.

SimEarth is based on James Lovelock's *Gaia* hypothesis. In brief, the theory states that the Earth is a self-regulating living organism. As Johnny Wilson noted in the original review of *SimEarth* (*CGW* #78), the *Gaia* hypothesis is brought to life in a dynamic simulation. This article will focus on specific aspects of the simulation.

First, note that the basic interface of *SimEarth* is closely related to that of *SimCity*. The Edit and Map Windows are almost identical. The Edit Window shows a close-up view of a portion of the planet while the Map Window gives a flat two-dimensional view of the whole planet. This reviewer found that by making the Edit window slightly smaller than the entire screen and centering it, it was possible to place smaller data windows, including the Map Window, around the perimeter of the screen. These, then, could easily be brought to the front of the screen by a click on the exposed edge of the hidden windows. This minimized the time spent pulling down menus and loading the needed windows.

The key to success in *SimEarth* is the effective use of the interrelated data windows. The importance of the different windows varies with the different time scales. For instance, this reviewer keeps the History, Model and Air Sample Windows on-screen throughout the geologic and evolution time scales.

After the player brings life to the planet, the Report Window keeps the player abreast of the species racing toward sentient status. Once a life form becomes sentient, the player will want to disable the display of life forms using the Life button in the Edit Window; this removes unnecessary clutter from the screen. Now in the civilization time scale, the player will want to make use of the Report Window, Civilization Model, Tech Ratio Graph and History Window. These windows will allow the player to effectively allocate energy to advance the technological level of the civilizations.

The Tone Monitor option is a valuable tool that can be used through all time scales. This option allows the player to monitor a specific output using sound instead of visual data. This translates output data, such as air temperature, to a tone. The higher the tone, the higher the value of the output. This reviewer also left the Atmosphere Sample Window on-screen throughout the game.

Advancing the technology level of a planet's civilizations requires conservation of the energy resources available to the planet. Technology level determines the efficiency with which the population uses energy. A player should closely monitor the energy efficiency percentages and output levels displayed in the Report Window. Allocate energy investments from the civilization model to produce those energies that can be used efficiently by your population. Focusing a population's use of either fossil fuels or nuclear energy too early in the game will leave one's planet without these precious resources later when they are needed to advance through the technology time scale.

SimEarth is a cerebral exercise. It leans toward a left-brain orientation and gives your analytical and logical skills a workout. A player looking for the construction-set feel and cute animations of *SimCity* will not find much in *SimEarth*, unless using the experimental mode. This writer does not see *SimEarth* reaching the record levels of success of *SimCity*. Rather, this game is complex and will require an investment of time by the player. Players who make the investment will be rewarded with a fascinating simulation that takes this genre to new levels. *SimEarth* is a diamond in the rough and one can either pass it by or shape it into a personal gem. **cgw**



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Blue Skies, White

Dynamix'

by Timothy

Timothy Trimble is a computer professional who works for Ashton-Tate. He is a flight simulator aficionado and has previously published in Plane and Pilot.

The simplicity of flight, basic air-to-air combat tactics, situational awareness and wind rushing over the cockpit is what flying in World War I was all about. Being able to see the opponent only 30 yards away while beating on a jammed machine gun or building up enough air speed to do a full inside loop are concepts that **Dynamix**' *Red Baron* brings to the arm-chair pilot.

Dynamix provides a rich feel for the Western Front environment of the 1915 to 1918 period with a high level of quality throughout the entire simulator. From the user interface and graphics to the flight dynamics and the use of a VCR for replay, it is easy to see that much time and energy was placed into the quality features designed for *Red Baron*.

While some flight simulators require a strange contortion of the player's hands between the joystick and the keyboard, **Dynamix** has been able to squeeze 24 different functions out of one joystick. Flight controls, throttle, views from the cockpit and external views can all be controlled via the joystick without having to touch the keyboard. The various configurations of holding down one or two buttons while moving the stick was a little confusing at first, although it soon becomes very easy to fly, fire and switch views without peeking at the reference card.

While playing *Red Baron* it became quite obvious to this reviewer that this is not just a simple "game" but is, indeed, a complex flight combat simulator. That is, it is complex in the sense that the flight dynamics of the various aircraft are very realistic and the personal characteristics of each of the Famous Aces is reflected in how they fly against the player. So, depending on which of the various missions one is flying, proper selection of aircraft for the job can have a great effect on the outcome. For example, the German Fokker Dr.I "Triplane" (the Red Baron's favorite) can fly circles around a French Spad 7, but would not be able to keep up with the Spad in straight flight. This would be good to remember before flying against Manfred von Richthofen, the game's namesake. However, it can also be noted that von Richthofen did not believe in the use of loops during combat, whereas Werner Voss, another ace pilot, will use many different types of acrobatic maneuvers.

What's It Like Up There?

The flying environment of *Red Baron* provides many enhancements to the "feel" of flying combat during WWI. The terrain is well mapped out and detailed and includes the entire Western Front. A pilot can take advantage of the environment by hiding in the clouds, which greatly reduces visibility, or jumping on an opponent from out of the sun. This can also be a disadvantage since looking towards the sun will reduce the pilot's vision. Flying under the clouds will provide shade and block out the sun, which slightly darkens the screen. If the pilot is wounded during combat, the screen will fade between red and normal, depending on how bad the wound is. If it is fatal, the entire screen will go red and the current flight is ended, usually along with condolences from the rest of the flight squadron.

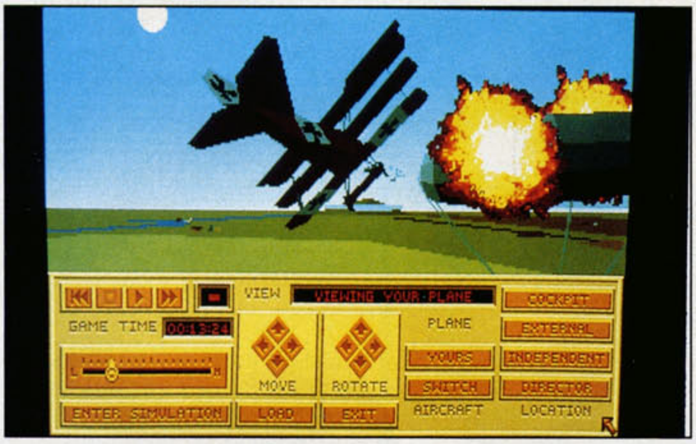
In many cases, when being shot at by the opponent, bullet holes will appear in the support spars, engine cowling and frame of the aircraft. As long as the shots do not hit anything vital, the holes will not cause any problems. Wind can also play a factor since it usually blows towards Germany. A strong wind can make it difficult to get back into allied territory, especially if the aircraft is damaged.

What Do We Do Now, Captain?

Red Baron allows players to dogfight a famous ace, fly a single mission or start a career. Although the dogfighting and single mission selections are good for immediately meeting up with trigger-happy opponents, the Career option is, by far, the most challenging part of the simulator. The player can begin a career as either a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps or as a *Leutnant* in the German Air Service. The career begins in December of 1915 and will last until the end of the war on November 10, 1918 – providing, of course, that the player can last that long.

The player is assigned an aircraft and given various missions at random locations. The missions reflect the historical situations during the pilot's time frame, with the introduction of new aircraft as the war progresses. Players also get the opportunity to fly in more significant missions as their experience (and record) improve. The missions include attacks on balloons and Zeppelins, escort reconnaissance aircraft, patrols, dogfights and much more. As the player becomes more experienced and gains more victories, he is promoted until finally reaching the rank of Captain (or *Rittmeister*). Once this rank is obtained the real fun begins. A Captain will get to select the type of aircraft that he wants to use and also gets to select the color. (Although histori-

TITLE:	Red Baron
SYSTEM:	IBM, Amiga
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Damon Slye
PUBLISHER:	Dynamix Subsidiary of Sierra Coarsegold, CA



Clouds, Red Baron

Red Baron

Trimble

cally the Germans were the only ones who did this, the Allied player gets to enjoy this little perq, as well.)

The Mission Airy Position

Once a mission is assigned, the player can review his assignment and set the "mission conditions." This allows the player to set the aircraft type, the location of the battle, the altitude, weather and the position of the sun. A realism panel is also available for adjusting the quality of the player's aircraft, the pilots on the player's flight group and the ability of the opponent's pilots.

When the mission begins, so does the fun. Usually, the missions begin in the air with the pilot flying in formation with the rest of the flight group, although one of the more challenging missions involves taking off from the aerodrome while the enemy is attacking from overhead. Upon sight of the enemy, the dogfights begin.

Buzzing Around The Not-So-Friendly Skies

Now with all the confusion of dogfighting when there are from two to eight aircraft in the air, all in close proximity, it becomes quite easy to shoot down a friendly airplane. Doing so will take the player before the Board of Inquiry, and if done three times during a career, it will result in the player losing his wings and being grounded permanently. However, successfully completing the mission results in a high score and a possible promotion. As the player's reputation and experience increases, invitations from some of the better (elite) squadrons will arrive. There will also be challenges issued by various famous ace pilots to meet in the skies for one-on-one dogfights.

Play It Again, Manfred

One of the most interesting features of *Red Baron* is the ability to use the VCR option for "taping" the mission and then playing it back later. The VCR is very well implemented and allows much more functionality than just doing a replay. What makes the VCR so special is the ability to change the "camera" angle and viewpoint from just about anywhere imaginable. The camera can be placed inside the cockpit, following the plane from the outside, following the opponent's plane from the outside or from an external position that is independent of the aircraft being viewed. Plus, there are two modes of operation, "Director" and "View-Only."

The Director mode allows the player to make view point changes to the original tape and then save it for later viewing. This places the player into the role of "Movie Editor" by allowing the player to take the original tape of the mission and change the views and perspectives to capture the best action shots. View-Only mode is just for reviewing the tapes without saving any viewpoint changes. Another nice feature is the ability to enter into the simulation, at any point on the tape, and fly the mission all over again! (The old "if only..." feature.)

Helpful Hints

To the novice player, it can be difficult trying to stay in the air against the best pilots of the Western or Eastern Front, but there are a few things to keep in mind that will help. First of all, the player should become familiar with the aircraft and its characteristics. Trying to fly a Spad 7 in a maneuvering battle with the von Richthofen will result in being shot down every time. Instead, a Sopwith Snipe might be more appropriate for tight maneuvers. Second, the player should fire the guns *only* when the opponent is at close range and properly in the gun sights. Ammo is limited and the guns tend to jam if fired in long bursts. Third, turn toward an attacker instead of turning away. The opponent will usually end up on the tail of the player if he turns away. By turning toward the attacker, the player can cut inside the attacker's turn and prevent him from following. Finally, the player can sometimes gain an advantage by disengaging from the dogfight and then reengaging. This gives the player the ability to refocus on where the opponent is and possibly to gain an advantage of speed when reengaging.

Three-Point Landing

Overall, *Red Baron* is a well thought-out, quality flight combat simulator that provides an historically accurate depiction of air combat during World War I. The flight dynamics of the aircraft are very realistic and offer a "instant" education on what the first "Top Guns" had to go through during their missions. *Red Baron* is a great break from the flight simulators that require twenty fingers on each hand and an eye on fifteen different instruments. This is true "back to the basics" and "seat of the pants" flying. In *CGW*'s sneak preview (#75, October 1990) it was observed that Dynamix set three goals for *Red Baron*: Get the flight dynamics right, make sure the dogfighting is realistic and get the historical color right. They have accomplished all three goals with vigor.

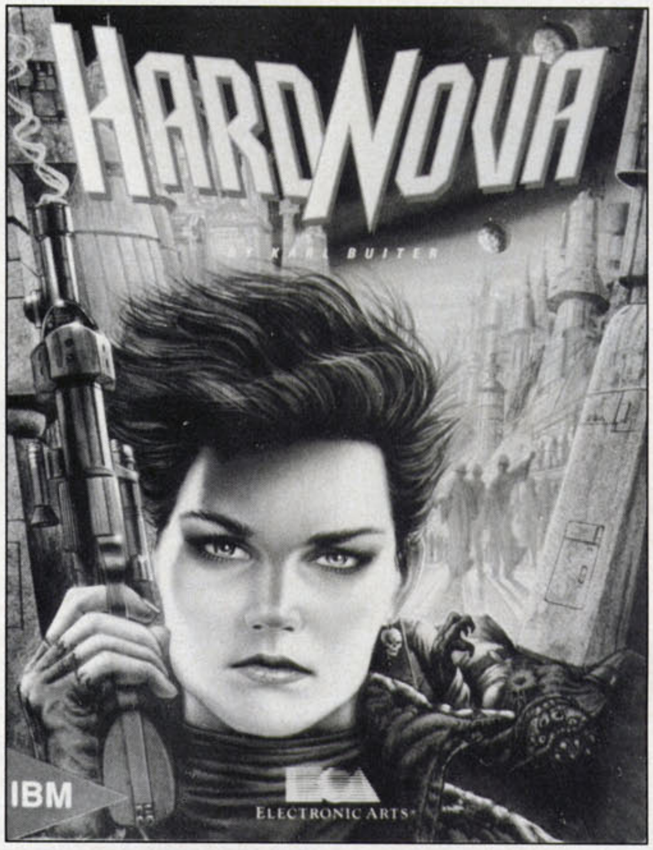
Let's see now, where did that Richthofen go? I just saw him a second ago.... **cgw**

Hard Nova — Hard Look

EA Launches a New Space Opera

by Ken St. Andre

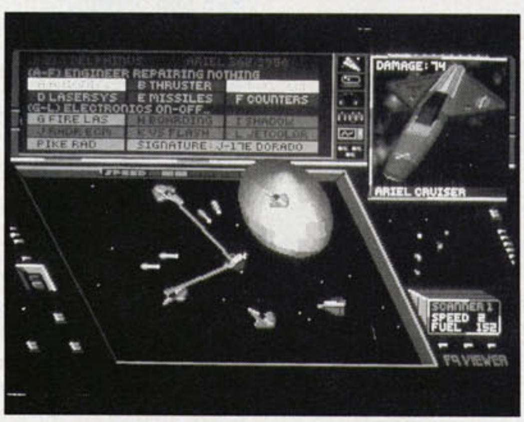
Ken St. Andre is the designer of the pen and paper version of Tunnels & Trolls *and has recently published a short story in the* Shadowrun *universe.*



Space: The Marketing Frontier

For some time now, the computer game industry has had a perception that what computer gamers want is "a really good space opera computer role-playing game." There have been a number of attempts to satisfy this demand: notably *Starflight I* and *II*, *Megatraveller*, *Space 1889*, *Buck Rogers*, *Star Command*, and the works of Karl Buiter, *EOS: Earth Orbit Station* (although not a CRPG per se, it certainly turned Karl's attention toward space), *Sentinel Worlds I* and *Hard Nova*. In many ways, *Hard Nova* is one of the best of the many computer space operas available.

The player takes the part of either Nova or Stark, anima and animus of a mud-drinking, trigger-happy, tough-talking space mercenary in the best tradition of Han Solo. In the course of adventuring, one will have to recover a Ciberan transport, track down the leader of an alien religious cult, assassinate the dictator of the planet Ariel and stop an interstellar invasion. Mostly, this means killing lots of unsavory humans and aliens while looking for special equipment and items.



Full of Sound and Fury

Karl Buiter and his design team have obviously put a lot of work into the flashier parts of *Hard Nova*. Even on this reviewer's decrepit old Tandy, without a mouse to click on things and speed up operations, *Hard Nova* still looks and sounds extremely good. The hi-res character portraits of player and non-player characters are exquisitely done. It's too bad, however, that the decision was made to re-use the portraits for less important NPCs. The same really ugly bartender portrait pops up all over the four systems. Also, all Lantas, D-Coros, Zero-Ls and Darcators look exactly the same.

Nova, however, is called a "quietly attractive" woman who would not draw a second glance. In fact, she is drop dead gorgeous, as are the other ladies who will join your mercenary band as the game goes on. The IBM version supports MCGA 256-color graphics as well as VGA, EGA and Tandy 1000. The oblique angle of view for the flight scenes gives a true feeling of three-dimensionality. On the other hand, the highly symmetrical dot-and-square top-down view of ground combat is a throwback to much more primitive arcade shootouts and is *strictly* two-dimensional.

In Space, Which Way is Up?

Among the flashy graphics included with the game is a very nice 11" x 21" full-color map of the Four Systems Group. Not only does this show the location of the various planets and stargates, it also shows eight very attractive (and well-known) astronomical photos of such things as the Pleiades and the Horsehead Nebula (along with eight numerical facts about each). As the program starts, one of these pictures appears on the screen and the player is asked to enter a Messier number, constellation name or such from the eight facts associated with each picture. As copy protection goes, this is *actually educational*, remarkably relevant to the game and very easy to tolerate.

TITLE:	Hard Nova
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Karl Buiter Eric Lindstrom and Jeff Haas
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Hard Nova is also pleasant on the ear. The theme music is appropriate for whatever is being done and will play using several sound boards, including the popular Ad Libs and MT32s. If never-ending tweetling drives a player crazy, however, it can be turned off

before starting the game. In fact, the music for the bigger shootouts really rocks and rolls! It isn't the classical symphony that one gets in *Loom*, but is certainly as good as any other game music around.

Tracking Targets to Plots

Another thing that should be mentioned is the real-time combat system. The program keeps track of the positions of over 100 moving targets (for lack of a better term) at all times, and continues moving them around without missing a beat. Big shootouts, either planetside or in space, are a quality trademark of *Hard Nova*, and if one likes plenty of combat, this game will have great appeal. Programmer-designer Karl Buiter feels that he has done a much better job with this aspect of the game than he did with his *Sentinel Worlds*.

While there is plenty of flash in *Hard Nova*, there is also more than 250k of screenplay/story by Eric Lindstrom and Jeff Haas. That would actually work out to somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000 words — a short novel. That is quite a lot of story, and structuring it so that it will make sense no matter what order the gamer accesses it is no easy task. It is also a fairly involved story which builds to a big conclusion. If one can get over his or her qualms at being more of a hired assassin than a mere mercenary, this game should be quite enjoyable.

There are a lot of nifty technical programming tricks in *Hard Nova* — nothing new, but it is still nice to see such features as automatic targeting, planetary rotation, inverse parsing for the conversations, et cetera in the game. The amalgamation of such techniques makes for a product that is actually as fun to play as it is to look at. Still, Karl missed a few tricks. To shoot something, one must first target it. Targeting is easy — merely press the space bar (on a planet) or the "/" key (in space) to change targets. However, it would have been easier and more effective in real-time combat to merely click on the desired target with the mouse instead of slowly cycling through every target on the screen.

"Yes, But is It Role-Playing?"

Hard Nova is also a true role-playing game in that the attributes of the player characters determine how well they can perform the various actions in the game. The better the personal agility, the better are the reactions in combat, the higher the chances become to hit with a weapon, and the more often *actual damage* to the foe is likely to occur. Players get the standard role-player's reward of going up in level (frequently, although it still amazes this reviewer that all one has to do is kill enough enemies to improve in every skill and attribute which a character possesses).

Despite the many good things about *Hard Nova*, the game still has its weaknesses and rough edges. There are misspelled words in the text of the conversations and everyone reacts to Nova as if she were the male Stark instead of the uniquely female mercenary that she is. Much of the humor is scatological in nature. Darcators get their kicks by evacuating(?) on other sentients. At one point in the game one gets to spit in another sentient's mouth, etc.

Oddly, the zero-g roulette has a miscalculation in the payoff routine that enables a player to almost always win when gambling. (*Hint:* Bet all three thirds of the table. The payoff for winning is set at 3 to 1 *plus* the original bet back!) Still, Karl deliberately designed the game so that money would be easy to acquire, stating he doesn't want players to worry about economics — just shoot things up.

Shoot First, Then Keep Shooting

The main strength of *Hard Nova* is also its main weakness. It is a very good real-time shoot-'em-up game. This reviewer likes to shoot things, but after 10 or 20 hours of killing everything that moves, one can lose interest. Every single spacecraft, other than the player's, exists *only* to be shot down. This shows a sort of emotional immaturity that is hard to condone in game design. *Hard Nova* panders directly to a sort of amoral adolescent arcade power lust in its players. This reviewer would like to think that his gaming alter-egos have more to them than a desire to shoot everything that moves and make lots of money while doing so.

Pushing the Final Frontier

Although it is something of an "apples and oranges" comparison, there were also some things in *Starflight*, both I and II, that were missed in *Hard Nova*. *Hard Nova* uses only four solar systems and eight planets. *Starflight* used a larger section of the galaxy with hundreds of worlds. The capacity to "simply explore" was much greater in *Starflight* and its aliens had greater depth and humor in their interactions with the player. Ideally, a good space opera game should have the *Hard Nova* game graphics in the *Starflight* universe. As gamers go, this reviewer is atypical in that he is not really interested in "solving" or winning the game. Instead, he is much more interested in the experience of living in and exploring the game universe. Still, the *Hard Nova* "miniverse" is an interesting place to visit, but who would want to live there? **cgw**

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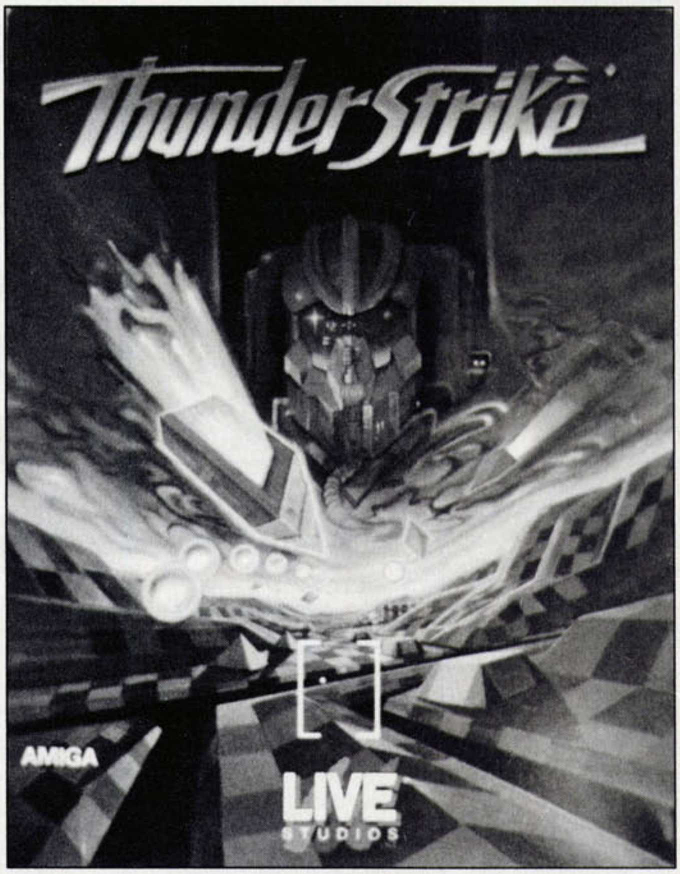
We Who Are About to Fly, Salute You

Live Studio's Thunderstrike

by Michael Chaut



TITLE:	Thunderstrike
SYSTEMS:	Amiga (512K Version), IBM (512K Version), Atari ST
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNERS:	Brian Pollock, Tony Beckwith
PUBLISHER:	LIVE Studios Inc. San Juan Capistrano, CA



Each combat was a life or death issue to the gladiators of ancient Rome, but the contests were strictly entertainment to the masses. In *Thunderstrike*, the pilots are the gladiators, challenging enemy drones in a live-fire arena where television ratings decide the success or failure for modern gladiators. After nearly 2,500 years, it's still "bread and circuses" to the masses. *Thunderstrike* is a straightforward 3-D flight "game/simulation" with a simple enough interface that even the most novice player can immediately pilot his/her craft with some degree of skill. In *Thunderstrike*, one can enjoy something of a flight simulator without having to earn a degree in aeronautics.

As the game opens, the player is asked to choose one of the five pre-approved ships, each with its own advantages and disadvantages with regard to speed, acceleration and maneuverability, from the MegaCorp Referee's Committee: the ThunderStrike 18, the StrikeHornet 22, the StrikeHornet 24, the ThunderFly 10, and the ThunderFly 25. The player must make a wise initial choice, because this craft will be the one piloted throughout the entire course of the game.

After choosing the craft, players move to an arena. Initially, there is no choice with regard to arena, but as one progresses to higher levels (level 10 or above), five different arenas (with ten different difficulty levels each) become available. Each arena signifies a different level of achievement. Deinon (levels 0-9), Xerxes (levels 10-19), Polloi (levels 20-29), Canton (levels 30-39), Synaps (levels 40-49).

The IBM version even has a distinctive automatic auto-save feature. In that version, one does not have to start over a level zero if his/her craft is destroyed, simply at the last level successfully completed. Unfortunately, the "auto-save feature" is only good while the computer is on, since the data is stored in RAM and will be lost if the computer is re-booted or turned off.

As the game begins, the player gets a colorful 3-D polygon-filled view of the battlefield. Looking to the right side of the screen, one can see the Main Overview Radar (MOR), the most vital part of the HUD). The MOR shows the position of all installations and drones from an overhead perspective. Used in conjunction with the Terrain Map [F4], the MOR will present valuable information to the player. In the center of the screen the player will see the Attack Radar (AR). This radar is only active when, at least, one drone comes within threatening proximity of the player's craft. Unlike the MOR, this radar rotates around one's position so that the play-er's craft is always positioned at the center. Saboteur drones are shown as cyan "blips" on the AR, while other drones are depicted as yellow "blips." Installations are not visible on the AR.

On the bottom right of the screen, there are diagonal yellow and red bars. Yellow depicts the pilot's shield energy and red indicates the TV show's ratings. The TV ratings help to determine the final game score and are also interesting to observe. As one's shields begin to lessen and the number of attacking drones increase, so does a pilot's ratings. In other words, as the action and the chance of death increase so do the number of viewers tuning in to the broadcast. Obviously, then, those who can fly "closest to the edge" will have the highest scores.

The rest of the screen is fairly intuitive. The panel marked "Inst" indicates the number of ground installations left to defend, while

"Gen" displays the number of drone generators are still in play for the current round. Drones will be randomly fired into the arena until all of the generators have been destroyed by the player.

The object of the game is for the player to defend their bases (ground installations) from enemy drones while trying to destroy the enemy drone generators. As the player begins the game, this task will seem very simple. As one moves up through the fifty levels of the game, however, this task will become very formidable. Players lose the game if all of the ground installations are destroyed in any single round *or* if their vessels are destroyed by enemy fire.

After entering the arena, the gamer will now be able to access his Terrain Map so as to ascertain the location of ground installations and the enemy generators. This will help the player to plan his strategy for the ensuing round.

The game interface allows the player to fine-tune the controls of his ship. Specifically, one can reverse the dive/climb and fire/thrust buttons on the joystick and mouse as well as left/right and up/down sensitivity on the mouse. The Amiga version does not have an option for joystick or keyboard.

At the end of each round, the player's performance will be assessed by the referees on the basis of: Hit Rate, Defense Rate and Vid Rate. A good hit rate is scored by efficient use of ammunition and results in a five point upgrade in each of the three attributes (speed, acceleration and turn rate) of your craft. Good defense results in no bonus, but a poor defense rate (anything under 100%) will result in downgrading the craft's attributes by five points. When the game ends (either in victory or by defeat), an overall point value is awarded to the player. This value is calculated as a function of the player's overall performance in Hit, Def and Vid Rates and placed (IBM version only) in the Top Ten High Scores List.

Warning: The following section contains specific hints on game play. Readers who prefer a more general briefing should avoid this section.

The player should always check the Terrain Map upon entering the arena [F4]. This will allow for an opportunity to design a strategy of attack. As one begins to move through the different levels of play, it will quickly become evident which strategies work and which do not.

Players will also note that after each level, the target hit rate (for bonus points) will increase (i.e. bonus points become tougher to receive as one's target hit rate becomes larger and larger). This reviewer discovered that the target hit rate does not increase as fast if the gamer just marginally achieves his/her acceptable hit rate. This made it possible to achieve higher craft attributes more efficiently.

When a player notices that a ground installation is being attacked by a saboteur, it is very important to immediately rescue that installation. Not protecting one's installations will cost the gamer a 5-point downgrade in each category (which can be very costly as one moves to the more difficult levels later in the game).

Players should try to accumulate the Military Hardware Pods that are sporadically left in the debris of destroyed enemy drones. These pods can provide for additional shield strength, fire power, speed and defensive abilities. Additionally, the Black Tracks that encircle the arena can provide the player (through "tracklocking") with a high-speed method of reaching a trouble spot in lieu of using turbo speed. This alternate method of high-speed travel can become very useful in level nine or above.

Conclusions

On the downside, the player will note that the attack radar (AR) and the main overview radar (MOR) are very difficult to distinguish. The Amiga version does not support a joystick and this was sorely missed. Conversely, the IBM version presents the player with sharper graphics and the opportunity to use a joystick. These attributes were seen as great enhancements.

The game only offers a slot-view camera angle. At first, this took some getting used to. It seemed to this reviewer that the storyline was just too convenient to the gameplay. In other words, this reviewer would have enjoyed additional views (i.e. a true cockpit view).

Although there is nothing new about the 3-D graphics, the normally unrealistic nature of polygon technology does not get in the way of enjoying *Thunderstrike*. In fact, due to the futuristic feel of the game, the look of the ships and terrain *actually work* in this case! The gameplay is smooth and the music and sound effects (using the Ad Lib) help to make the game move quickly. Those who want a flight simulation are looking at the wrong game. Those who want a challenging game with more than the average arcade style, however, are bound to be pleasantly surprised.

Upon first play of the game, one might think that *Thunderstrike* is just another run-of-the-mill, "shoot-'em-up" arcade game. However, after closer inspection, this reviewer came to the realization that *Thunderstrike* is fast-paced, requires a modicum of thought, and is addicting. **CGW**

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ADVENTURE/ ROLE-PLAYING SECTION

PAST

	IBM	AMI	C64
Bane / Cosmic Forge	39	39	-
Bards Tale III	33	-	-
Champions Krynn	34	34	28
Curse Azure Bonds	34	34	28
Dragon Strike	34	34	28
Dragon Wars	34	34	29
Dungeon Master	-	28	-
Dungeon Master 2	-	28	-
Eye of Beholder	34	-	-
Federation	33	-	-
Heroes Quest	39	39	-
Heroes Quest 2	39	-	-
Kings Bounty	34	-	28
Kings Quest 1-3	34	34	-
Kings Quest 4	39	39	-
Kings Quest 5 VGA	45	-	-
Kings Quest 5 EGA	39	-	-
Legend of Faerghail	34	28	-
Loom	39	39	-
Lord of the Rings	36	-	-
Magic Candle	34	-	28
Might & Magic	19	-	19
Might & Magic 2	34	39	28
Pirates	19	19	19
Pool of Radience	34	34	28
Secret Monkey Isle	39	39	-
Secret Silver Blades	34	-	28
Space 1889	33	-	-
Spirit of Excaliber	34	34	-
The Immortal	-	34	-
Tunnels & Trolls	34	-	-
Ultima 4	39	-	39
Ultima 5	39	39	39
Ultima 6	45	-	39

PRESENT

	IBM	AMI	C64
Count Down	39	-	-
Covert Action	37	-	-
It Came /Desert	34	34	-
It Came /Desert 2	-	13	-
Savage Empire	39	-	-
Spell Casting 101	39	-	-

FUTURE

	IBM	AMI	C64
BattleTech 2	33	-	-
Buck Rogers	33	33	28
Captive...Excellent!	-	34	-
Hard Nova	34	-	-
Light Speed	37	-	-
Mega Traveller	39	-	-
MechWarrior	34	-	-
Overlord	33	33	-
Renegade Leg. Inter	39	-	-
Rise of Dragon	33	-	-
StarControl	34	-	-
StarFlight 1	15	-	28
StarFlight 2	34	-	-
Wing Commander	45	-	-
Wing Co. Secr. Miss.	21	-	-

STRATEGY SECTION

PRE WWI

	IBM	AMI	C64
Ancient Art War (BROD)	31	-	-
Ancient War Sea (BROD)	31	-	-
Bandit Kings China (KOEI)	39	39	-
Battles of Napoleon (SSI)	34	-	34
Civil War Vol. 1 (SSG)	28	-	28
Civil War Vol. 2 (SSG)	28	-	28
Civil War Vol. 3 (SSG)	28	-	28
Centurian Def. Rome (E.A.)	34	-	-
Decision at Gettsburg (TIGL)	34	-	-
Genghis Khan (KOEI)	39	39	-
Gettysburg (SSI)	39	-	34
Gold of Americas (SSG)	28	28	-
Grand Fleet (SIMCAN)	39	-	-
Knights of Sky (MICROPR)	37	-	-
Nobunaga's Amb. 2 (KOEI)	39	-	-
Prelude to Jutland (GQ)	29	-	-
Red Baron (DYNAMIX)	39	-	-
Romance 3 Kingdoms (KOEI)	46	-	46
Revolution '76 (BRITT)	34	-	-
Sons of Liberty (SSI)	15	-	15
Warlords (SSG)	34	34	-
War of the Lance (SSI)	34	-	28
Waterloo (SSI)	39	-	-

WORLD WAR II

	IBM	AMI	C64
Action Stations V. 3.0	34	-	-
Action N. Atlantic (GQ)	29	-	-
Carriers at War (SSG)	-	-	34
Ger. Raider Atlantis (GQ)	29	-	-
Banzai (GQ)	29	-	-
B. Tank Barbarossa (S.C.)	39	-	-
Battlehawks '42 (LUCAS)	34	-	-
Bismarck (GQ)	29	-	-
Europe Ablaze (SSG)	-	-	28
Fire Brigade (PANTHER)	34	34	-
Fleet Med (SIM CAN)	39	-	-
Halls Montezuma (SSG)	28	28	28
In Harms Way (SIM CAN)	39	-	-
Kreigsmarine (SIM CAN)	39	-	-
Long Lance (SIM CAN)	39	-	-
Malta Storm (SIM CAN)	39	-	-
Marianas Turkey Shoot (GQ)	29	-	-
Midway(GQ)	29	-	-
Panzer Battles (SSG)	28	-	28
Panzer Strike (SSI)	-	-	34
River Plate (GQ)	29	-	-
Rommel N. Africa(SSG)	28	-	28
Russia (SSG)	-	-	28
Second Front (SSG)	39	39	-
Sherman M-4 (EURO)	34	34	-
Shiloh (SSI)	-	-	19
Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)	37	-	-
Storm Across Europe (SSI)	39	39	39
Their Finest Hour (LUCAS)	39	39	-
Typhoon of Steel (SSI)	-	39	34

MODERN

	IBM	AMI	C64
A.T.P. (SUB LOGIC)	39	-	-
A-10 Tank Killer (DYNA)	34	34	-
Command HQ (MICROPL)	37	-	-
F-14 Tomcat (ACTIVIS)	34	-	28
F-16 Combat Pilot (E.A)	19	-	24
F-19 Stealth Fight (MICROPR)	42	37	28
Flight /Intruder (S.HOLOBY)	39	-	-
5th Eskrada (SIM CAN)	39	39	-
Gunship (MICROPROSE)	34	36	28
Harpoon v.1.2 (360)	39	39	-
Harpoon #2 N. Atlantic (360)	21	21	-
Harpoon #3 Med.(360)	21	21	-
Harpoon Scen. Edit. (360)	28	-	-
LHX Attack Chopper (E.A.)	39	-	-
M-1 Tank Plat. (MICROPR)	42	39	-
Main B. Tank Germany (S C)	39	-	-
Nuclear War (NEWWORLD)	34	34	-
Red Storm Risin. (MICROPR)	34	36	29
7th Fleet (SIM CAN)	39	39	39
Stormovik SU-25 (E.A.)	34	-	-
Team Yankee (EURO)	39	39	-

SCI-FI

	IBM	AMI	C64
Imperium (E.A.)	28	28	-
Reach for the Stars (SSG)	28	28	28
StarFleet 2 (SSI)	39	-	-

GENERAL

	IBM	AMI	C64
PowerMonger (E.A.)	-	34	-
RailRoad Tycoon	39	-	-
Sim City (MAXIS)	34	34	28
Sim City Ter. Edit.	15	-	-
Sim City Set #1 Ancient	23	23	-
Sim City Set #2 Future	23	23	-
Sim Earth	45	-	-
UMS 2 (MICROPL)	37	-	-

SPORTS

	IBM	AMI	C64
Battle Chess	34	34	28
Battle Chess 2	34	-	-
Chess Master 2100	34	34	28
Hockey League Sim.	28	28	-
Indy 500	34	34	-
Jack Nicklaus Unltd.	39	39	-
Links	39	39	-
PGA Tour Golf	34	-	-
Shanghai 2	34	-	-
Test Drive 3	39	-	-
TV Sports Basketball	34	34	-
TV Sports Football	34	34	-
TV " " '89 Teams	12	12	-
Wayne Gretsky	-	34	-
Wayne Gretsky 2	34	-	-

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"The Dream" (Mark Ferrari) Best of Show (1989 Baycon Art Show)



Bringing Imagination to Life

A Portfolio Highlighting Selected Computer Game Artists

The painting that opens this exhibition is entitled "The Dream." At the time it was painted, artist Mark Ferrari was living in a back room of a house in Albany, California, performing domestic chores and yardwork in order to pay for room and board. He was building a portfolio in order to work full-time as an illustrator. Computer art, such as his revolutionary work on *Loom* and *The Secret of Monkey Island* which brought the term "dither" to the forefront of computer art discussions, was the furthest thing from his mind.

"The Dream," winner of both "Best Fantasy" and "Best of Show" at the 1989 Baycon (science fiction and fantasy convention), has become his personal signature. It is printed in *Computer Gaming World* by Mark's permission and is unavailable for publication elsewhere. It is used as an introduction to this article because "The Dream" was not *always* Mark's dream, and the dreams of computer artists differ. Yet, the desire is the same. Artists want to reach an audience with their visions. They want to bring their images to life. Computer art is both a friend and foe in this endeavor. This article will introduce *CGW* readers to five computer artists in the computer game industry.



"Serpent People" (Mark Ferrari) from S. Peterson's Field Guide to Creatures of the Dreamlands *(**Chaosium, Inc.**)*

Mark Ferrari (Lucasfilm Games)

Mark has only been making a living as an artist for three or four years. Before that, he worked with delinquent boys in a home in Livermore. Ironically, his college degree is in English rather than either art or social work. When he was younger, everyone thought he was going to be an artist. Yet, he remembers using his talent to win the approval of other people and basing his entire self-esteem on how people reacted to each picture. By the time he was a sophomore in college, he *hated* art. He gave away all of his stuff and thought he would never touch art again. For seven years, he didn't.



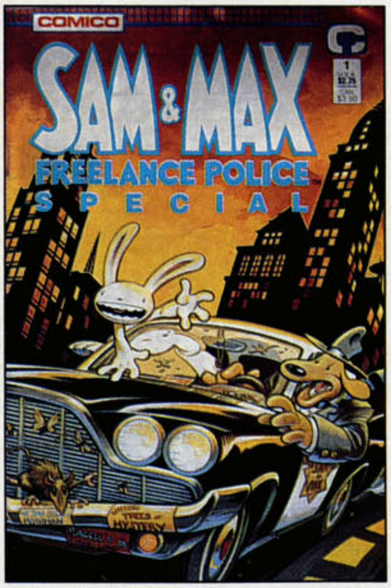
"Cathedral" (Mark Ferrari) Art test for Loom

Then, after seven years of working with juveniles, he discovered that while he really enjoyed working with youths, he didn't enjoy working with the adults that were in charge of those programs. He decided that he could best fulfill his potential by working as a volunteer, so he looked for another way to make a living.

He came up with a number of potential ideas on how to make a living and decided to dabble until he found out what he would like. He readily admits that he took up art first because it was easiest to dabble in; he was sure that he would hate it; and he could eliminate it immediately. However, he discovered that his old feelings were gone and that his work, subject matter and style were completely different. So, he never got to the other things he was planning to dabble in.

At that point, he enrolled in art school and stated in his statement of purpose that the only thing he *didn't* want to do was be an illustrator. He didn't want to illustrate mechanical blunders. By the end of the second semester, he was out of money. His completed degree in English kept him from getting financial aid, but he finally knew what he wanted to do. He created a portfolio and tried for a month and a half to show his work at **Lucasfilm**. He did not get anywhere, but an illustrator friend, Gary Rudle, told him not to worry because when **Lucasfilm** wanted him, they'd find him. He thought it was incredibly unlikely, but met Steve Purcell through a former art school instructor.

Rumor had it that Steve was working for **Lucasfilm**, but he ended up putting Mark in touch with **Chaosium** to do a box cover. They changed their minds and he ended up doing the *Creatures of the Dreamland* book which illustrated their H. P. Lovecraft role-playing universe (see the illustration reprinted in this article). Two months later, he displayed his work at Baycon, where "The Dream" won the aforementioned awards. Gary Winnock, of **Lucasfilm**'s game division, was there and invited him to lunch at Skywalker Ranch. He told them he couldn't go to work until September because of the book and walked away from the interview thinking he had blown his chance to work for **Lucasfilm**.



Sam and Max: Freelance Police *(Steve Purcell)*
*Comic book cover (**Comico Publications**)*

As it turned out, he finished the book at 2:00 AM on September 6 and started doing test screens for the high-res version of *Zak McCracken and the Alien Mindbenders* at **Lucasfilm** by 9:00 AM on the same day. When he began, he confesses that he was a technophobe and knew nothing about computers or paint programs. Gary had him do a test of the native village and library in *Zak* so that he could get started. After a couple of hours of using the 16-color palette, he started mixing up colors using the, by now, characteristic dither to create colors. Everyone thought the picture was great, but the programmers carefully explained that they couldn't compress enough data to be able to do pictures like that.

Mark was frustrated because the programmers couldn't compress dither. So, at one point, he took a machine home over a holiday weekend and drew a twilight scene (that eventually found itself in a modified form in the opening scenes of *Loom*). He brought the machine back, punched up the screen he had drawn and left the room. After lunch, he came back to discover several people gathered around the screen. Most importantly, **Lucasfilm Games** executive Steve Arnold was asking why they *couldn't* do pictures like that and assigned the programmers the task of figuring out how to do it. The rest, as illustrated by the test screen for *Loom* reprinted in this article, is history.

According to Mark, the most enjoyable challenge in doing these games comes from the very limited nature of the medium. He says it is impossible to do in computer games what one can do on paper. His most satisfying success has come from trying to use sixteen colors and make something beautiful. That situation is changing as the available color palette expands to 256 color VGA and beyond. However, in a year or

two the technology will advance and there will be a new challenge.

Mark noted that computer artists are currently using a mouse to draw images on the screen and made a vague reference to the fact that they may not be drawing directly on the screen for very much longer. "The kinds of skills we're using," he hinted, "could become obsolete in the near future."

Right now, Mark is preparing to work on a possible 100+ page coffee-table book for Ian and Betty Ballantine (who produced the successful *Gnomes* book). However, he expects to return to computer art when the medium offers more opportunity.



*"Vampire" (Denis Loubet) Art test for **Origin**'s new in-house animation system, STUD*

Steve Purcell (Lucasfilm Games)

Steve Purcell never fought his artistic ability. He started doing freelance illustration immediately out of art school. In fact, one of his first jobs was drawing package illustrations for computer games (one of his publishers was **Winner's Circle**, a software store that published a few games under its own label). At the same time, he began to illustrate comics for **Marvel Comics**. His first "book" was a toy-related title called *Animax. Animax* was based on a series of bizarre toys that never came out. They were cars with animal heads that would drive around and communicate with their drivers. Later on, he was glad to get a chance to do *Sam and Max: Freelance Police* for **Comico** (see the cover pictured in this article).

Steve started work as a computer artist about three years ago. His first job with **Lucasfilm Games** was the screen art for *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. Like Mark, Steve hadn't had any experience with computers before being put to work at **Lucasfilm**. Gary Winnock's philosophy seemed to be taking someone who could draw and then showing them how to work on a computer.

Steve has a fondness for *Etch-A-Sketch* art and feels that his skill with the "toy" has added to his skill with the computer. He thinks this is so because the hand-eye coordination required for the *Etch-A-Sketch* is similar to working with a mouse (i.e. the artist is performing an action away from the screen that has an effect on the screen).

Steve also feels that his ability with computer art is continually improving because he is able to learn to do what he needs to do for the games piece by piece. He uses both a paint program and the in-house animation system BUYLE (virtually all **Lucasfilm** acronyms are not conducive to good lunchtime conversation). Like Mark, he looks forward to future technologies where paintings are scanned and the backgrounds look more like the delightful details in Disney's animated films. In the current state of computer art, the limited color palette is always a problem, but Purcell believes that future advances in scanning technology will improve the situation. Once the basic image has been captured, he notes that the computer will assist in tweaking the product up to the standard desired.

Purcell's specialty tends to be the objects, expressions or animations that are either funny or scary. He is often called upon to execute the "special case animations" where something happens only in one room or at one time during the game. An example is when the bishop explodes in *Loom*. In fact, that is one of the standard examples used whenever **Lucasfilm** is demonstrating special case animation to new artists.



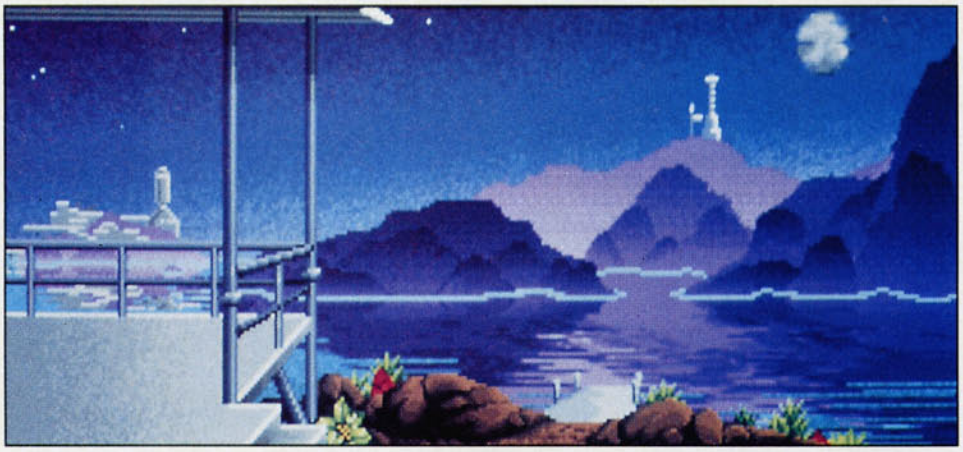
"Lands of Mystery" (Denis Loubet) from Lands of Mystery *(Hero Games Supplement, **Iron Crown Enterprises**)*

CGW was told that some scenes sketched by Steve had been axed from *The Secret of Monkey Island* because of lack of disk space. We asked him to describe one and he recounted a scene on the pier where Guybrush was supposed to be confronted by a bunch of ghosts on the dock. He still had the "head of the navigator" in his hand and was supposed to bowl his way out of trouble.

Steve went on to state that artists often spend extra time on some sequences in order to create something visual enough to be able to convince the project leader and programmers that it was something they really wanted. For example, in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*, the sequence with the whip where Indy is on the ledge of the castle was added because the artists thought Indy needed to do more with his whip. Purcell found out where **Lucasfilm** had gotten their whips and bought one in order to get the animation just right.

Denis Loubet (Origin Systems)

Origin Systems has also had a policy of converting illustrators from the paper and canvas media to the computer screen. Denis Loubet is the artist supervisor at **Origin**. He never had any doubt as to what he was going to do with his life; he just didn't know where he was going to plug in, comic illustrating or painting book covers. The dominant influences on his art have been book il-



"Water World" (Glen Johnson) Landscape removed from Wing Commander



Beast Warriors of Shaolin *(Glen Johnson) Comic book cover (**Pied Piper Comics**)*

lustrators Frank Frazetta, Michael Whelan and Boris Vallejo, as well as comic artists John Byrne and Frank Miller.

Today, Loubet states unequivocally that, given the chance to illustrate comic books, he would stick with computer games. "We're getting to the top of the form in this [the computer game] medium and I want to ride this and see where it goes," Denis observes.

About ten years ago, Denis was working for **Steve Jackson Games**, a pen and paper game company based in Austin (see the "Lands of Mystery" cover photo). Later, he went freelance for five or six years and eventually ended up full-time at **Origin**. The pilgrimage is interesting. While Denis was still working for Steve Jackson, he met Lord British and painted the cover for *Ultima I*. While he was freelancing, he drew the *Ultima III* and *Ultima IV* covers. After being hired by **Origin**, he painted *Ultima V*'s and *Ultima VI*'s covers.

Interestingly enough, **Origin** hired Denis without knowing for sure whether they had enough work for a full-time artist. A couple of weeks later, however, they noticed that he seemed to be booked up until the year 2000. Now, the company boasts seven full-time artists and might need more.

Asked about differences between computer art and illustration in general, Denis says there are very few differences. He calls the computer another tool. Perhaps the most important difference is that when one does a painting, it takes courage to make a change. With the computer, one never has to worry because it is possible to return to a saved form.

In fact, Denis wishes that he had computer tools to help with his paintings for box illustrations. He observed that there is a major difference between book covers and box covers for computer games. Book cover illustrations can be subtle, but game covers generally have some violence. The *Martian Dreams* cover will be an exception, however.

At **Origin**, artists are assigned scenes and sequences by project leaders and creative directors. If a character walks across the screen and kneels in one of their computer games, for example, the artist is assigned, videotapes a figure going through the motions in live action and illustrates the sequence. This is somewhat similar to the technique Ralph Bakshi used in making *Wizards* and his *The Lord of the Rings* film. Bakshi filmed live figures in shadow and drew on top of the shapes. The artists at Origin use some rotoscoping, as well.

Asked what technology would most change the way computer game artists did their work, Loubet had two observations. He would like to be able to do sketches on the computer via graphics tablets and wishes Disney's *Animation Studio* software was available for the IBM.

If Denis could do any comic book he would like to do, he would draw a horror comic in such a way that it hides more than it shows. It would be Lovecraftian horror. "Horror hasn't been done in computer games," he suggested, "because you can't scare people with little scrunched-up figures." He notes that the STUD system (see the screen



*"UFO Faces" (Cynthia Hamilton) from cancelled UFO game (**Electronic Arts**)*

shot in this article) is getting to the full-figured form where such a product could be done.

Glen Johnson (Origin Systems)

While he was still in high school, Glen managed to land his first professional job of illustration. It was not exactly a thrilling prospect, however, since it was illustrating a book on emphysema. After graduation, he painted personal portraits and watercolors to provide cash, occasionally rendering illustrations for newspapers. Glen made his initial mark when he went into illustrating comics, however. He followed Pat Broderick as the artist for **Eclipse Comics** *Sunrunners*. He was happy with the book until it was cancelled by **Eclipse** because of allegedly poor sales and taken over by **Sirius Comics**. Unfortunately, the design team didn't like the direction **Sirius** was taking the book, so they elected to quit working on that title. Later, he worked with Peter Quinones on *Beast Warriors of Shaolin*, published by regionally distributed **Pied Piper Comics** (see the cover in this article). The story idea in that series was that martial arts was created by observing animals. So, the creators asked "What would happen if they used mystical arts to turn animals into humans in order for humans to be trained by the animals themselves?" It was a wild idea and Johnson still seems intrigued by it. At the same time he was drawing comics, however, he was always doing illustrations for game companies and portraits on commission.

After finishing a project with now-defunct **Blackthorne Comics**, Glen was looking for a change. Dallas Snell saw some of his game illustrations and hired him. Johnson jokes that **Origin** spent more money on plane fare during his first year than they did on his salary, since the company moved him from Texas to New Hampshire and eventually back to Texas.

Johnson prefers computer art because it allows artists to make changes easier. He states that painting is more difficult because, once the color is down, one is stuck with it. He contends that artists become "spoiled" once they get used to working on the computer. He looks forward to the development of more elaborate scanning technology and loves some of the experimental processes that **Origin** is using to make their products more life-like. He believes that using scanners to create backgrounds blends the strengths of both computer and paper imaging in order to get the best of both worlds. (See the landscape-background for *Wing Commander* which was cut in order to open up disk space by simplifying the story-telling aspects of the game.)

Cynthia Hamilton (Electronic Arts)

Electronic Arts managed to recruit an artist from yet a different milieu. Cynthia Hamilton had been drawing storyboards for advertising agencies for some time. Then she moved to designing slides and overheads for a management consulting firm. She felt, however, that any graphic artist in today's world needed to learn to draw on the computer. She learned how to use a paint program at **Britannica Software** while working on a second art disk for *Jigsaw*, but Greg Johnson and Paul Reiche III were so impressed with her work that they encouraged her to join the art department at **Electronic Arts**.

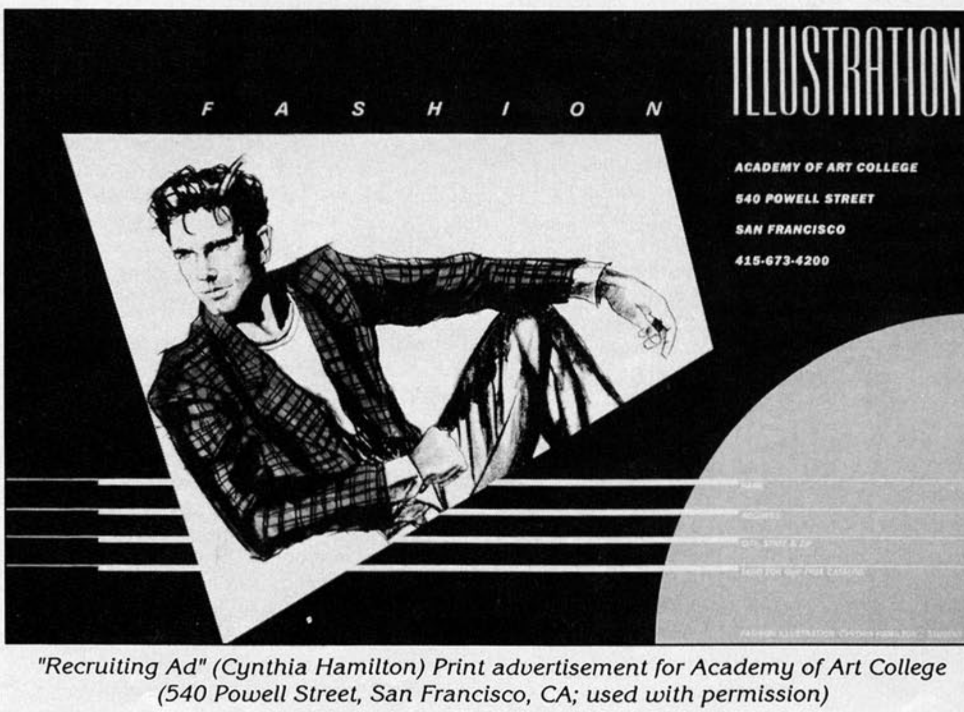
The fact that she had fashion drawing experience (see the print ad featured in this article) has enabled her to do lots of figure and face work for **Electronic Arts**. Readers will have seen her work in numerous **EA** games, but she has also worked on the art for several games that were cancelled after she had finished her work. She etched circa 96 different faces for *UFO* (see the screen shot in this article), only to see the game "killed" after several personnel changes had taken place in what was formerly the "Interactive Stories" division. She also contributed considerable work on a personal favorite, *Thieves' World* (where the rights to the property reverted to the editors of the anthology series).

As for differences between standard illustration and computer art, Cynthia suggested that she always likes to be able to hang what she's done on the wall. Naturally, that is not possible with computers, but they do provide the ability to save pieces of work and manipulate them in the future. Standard art media are nicer to keep and computer tools are easier to design with.

Her most frustrating experiences with computer tools have been when one of the in-house development programs crashes on her and when she lost a hard drive full of work and had to have a programmer recover it for her. She wishes she could work in an environment that was using more scanning and capture technology since she sees the field advancing in that direction.

To Dream, Perchance to Digitize

The world of computer game art is just beginning to attract a wide array of proven talents from outside the realm of the entertainment software industry. These five examples are the tip of an exciting iceberg of talent being developed in order to create aesthetically magnificent products in the future. **cgw**



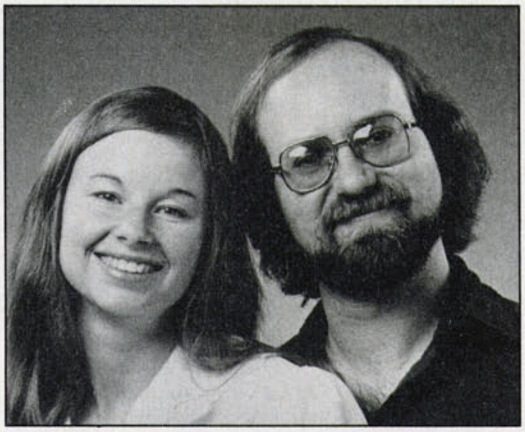
"Recruiting Ad" (Cynthia Hamilton) Print advertisement for Academy of Art College (540 Powell Street, San Francisco, CA; used with permission)

Lori and Corey's *Quest for Glory*

Lori and Corey Cole form the husband and wife design team behind the Quest for Glory *series of adventure/role-playing games. This article serves to delineate their design philosophy.*

Game Design "Elementals"

by Lori and Corey Cole



When we first proposed the *Quest for Glory* game series to **Sierra On-Line**, we wanted to create a different kind of adventure game. We wanted to write the kind of game that we would enjoy playing; one which combined the character development and first-person identification of a role-playing game with the rich story and background more commonly found in computer adventure games.

Lori: I prefer traditional pen-and-pencil fantasy role-playing (FRP) games where the emphasis is on character development and his/her abilities, as compared to the computer versions where your party of characters mostly hack this monster and slash that one. So, in computer FRPs I want to create a strong sense of identity between the player and his character, and his character's goals. Also, I prefer games which tell a story and reveal the intricacies of the plot to the player as his character progresses through the game.

Corey: I am more puzzle-oriented than Lori. My job was to ensure that, as well as experiencing a rich and satisfying story, a character would have to overcome a series of obstacles on the way to accomplishing his main goals. This is the concept known as "conflict" in traditional writing. That is, achieving a goal has no meaning unless the character has to work, even struggle, to get there. I developed most of the skill and combat systems, and tried to balance them so that the character could fulfill his goals, but only by building up his particular skills. We also tried to build in as many "alternate solutions" as possible, both to reduce player frustration and to let the player create his/her own unique story, instead of slavishly following ours.

Quest for Glory was conceived from the start as a four-game series, along the lines of a book tetralogy (a trilogy written by authors who can't stop at three). This way, we could have character and story development that flowed smoothly from game to game. By planning the game as a sequence from the start, we were also able to foreshadow events of the later games.

Lori: This also allowed us to balance out the abilities and events so each game builds in intensity and drama from the previous game. On the other hand, the games have to be designed so that a new player can pick up any game in the series and play without being lost and overwhelmed by events from the previous games.

Corey: As we design and later "tune" these games, we are constantly juggling several, almost antagonistic, design goals. We are telling a story, but we want it to be the *player's* story, so we want to provide as much freedom as possible within the constraints of the game world. We want the puzzles and challenges to *feel* difficult, yet give the player character a chance to succeed after reasonable effort. (It's no fun to "lose," but it isn't much better to "win" so easily that players feel they were handed the victory.) We want the game world to feel "real" and the non-player characters to "live," but not at the cost of making the game boring.

Several themes are developed through the entire series. For example, the "cycle of the seasons" is a metaphor for the player character's development and the classical "elements" describe the game settings. Game One, *So You Want To Be A Hero*, takes place in an Alpine valley in early Spring, with the protagonist just starting out as a hero. The mountain barriers, the lush forest, and such game magic as Erana's Peace represent the element of Earth. We also planned the game to appeal to players unfamiliar with either the role-playing or adventure computer game genres. We intentionally set the game in the somewhat-overused "generic fantasy medieval Europe" and kept the overall power level of both players and opponents relatively low. This latter decision also left the player's character plenty of room for continuing development in the later games.

Corey: Trying to design games to appeal to both experienced and new computer game players involves having puzzles that are fair — they can be solved strictly from clues available during play of the game — but that take some effort to solve. We used two main techniques for this. First, clues are scattered around the game, so that the player's character must explore and talk to a number of people in order to discover them. Second, the player must use the Skill System. It may be "obvious" to the player that his character should climb a steep wall, but it takes sufficient climbing skill to accomplish the task. Otherwise, the character must either practice climbing until "enough" skill is accrued or must find an alternate solution that does not involve climbing. One thing we are meticulous about is ensuring that every puzzle is solvable in some way by every character, no matter which skills were chosen at the beginning of the game.

Lori: Having a choice of character types was one way to accommodate the varied amount of game-playing experience our players start the game with. The Fighter in *So You Want To Be A Hero* is an easy character to start out with and is extremely likely to survive long enough to finish the game. The Thief is the toughest to win with, since he is the most likely to get "caught" because his character usually has to do things that one normally *shouldn't* be doing. So, the Fighter is just the right choice for those who think it is fun to go out and fight monsters without worrying about winning. Those who don't like fighting/killing, and just want to explore and solve puzzles, will find the Magic-User is the right character for them to play. For those experienced players who want to have a more varied character, we allow hybrid characters. One can create a Fighter/Magic-User or customize a character by selecting specific skills. Each character has his own method of solving puzzles, so a player can play this game several times without just playing the same game over.

In Game Two, *Trial By Fire*, we moved to summertime in the desert heat and a much fresher fantasy setting drawn from the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. The character is now an established Hero and must undergo a series of challenges on both personal and general levels. His personal initiation echoes the tasks he must undergo to save the twin cities of Shapeir and Raseir. Fire is the predominant element, but in keeping with the stories-within-stories flavor of *The Arabian Nights*, we also made the cycle of the four elements a major sub-theme.

Lori: It was a case of "and now for something completely different." I really want to break away from the cliches of computer games where all places look basically the same and all people look and act alike. This game series setting is an entire world. The people are all unique individuals and must be dealt with as such. Some are trustworthy, while others will go out of their way to lie to one's character. Even some non-player "friends" may give one misinformation about some subjects, because — like real people — they don't know everything or might simply be confused.

Corey: The difficult balancing act with misinformation is to keep the game fair. We make sure that there are several sources for any crucial piece of information. Lori also uses subtleties of phrasing to help the player spot when a character is lying or is not really sure of an answer. The player can also get clues from each non-player character's personality (as revealed in other text messages). For instance, Ali Chica in *Trial By Fire* (loosely based on Chico Marx, just as Ali Fakir gives a nod to Groucho), is a very friendly, "helpful" character, but so scatter-brained that his information is almost valueless. Or maybe he just thinks a little differently from the rest of us!

Game Three is set in autumn and (loosely) involves the element of air. It has already gone through several incarnations. The original working title was to be "All Hallow's Eve," and it would be a sort of *Night on Bald Mountain* setting. We eventually settled on "Shadows of Darkness" as the title. It would have a Transylvania/Gothic Horror theme. *Quest for Glory III* is tentatively scheduled for release in Spring 1992 (each game takes over a year to design and develop).

Corey: (The subtitle is supposed to make the player think, "How can darkness cast a shadow? Shadows come from light.") We had the story mostly plotted out until a "friend" told us what she guessed the setting would be, and sent us scurrying back to the drawing board. We're still not quite sure which setting we will use. More certain is the theme, which will involve the character becoming more mature and having to make some difficult ethical and moral decisions with no absolute "right" or "wrong" answers.

Lori: Originally, I had a different ending for *Trial By Fire* which would lead into the Transylvania ("Mordavia") setting. The artist didn't think he could pull it off, and so we ended with an ambiguous lead-in. This may work out anyway, if we decide to change our setting.

Game Four doesn't have a title as yet. It will be set in a series of islands, probably ancient Greek culture (but don't hold us to it!), and will cover the winter or mature phase of the character's life. Obviously, water is the predominant element. In Silmaria, the character must become

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more than a hero in order to bring together a number of disparate, and fiercely independent, peoples. The character will need to be "all things to all people," while retaining his own essential integrity.

Lori: One of the goals Corey and I are trying to accomplish is to have the player really identify and care about the character she/he plays. This isn't just a pixel image moving a screen, it's a real character you've built up from just a "wannabe" Hero to someone powerful and important.

Corey: We also want the game series to have a definite beginning and ending. It is *not* a series of excerpts from the life of a character, but a story that tells of his growth and development through conflict. The story *must* have a resolution; the player should go away satisfied that he/she has really accomplished something at each stage of the game, and through the series as a whole. We also have a pragmatic reason for this. We *don't* want to devote a lifetime to creating sequels to the same game!

One aspect of creating *Quest for Glory*, that has been both fun and frustrating at times, is the need to work within the limitations of current computer systems and software tools. We would have liked to let the player choose a male or female character, or to play as a Centaur or an Ogre. That's how we conceived of the game originally. Unfortunately, we would need 30 disks just to hold all the animation needed to show the player character's actions on-screen.

Lori: On the other hand, by knowing the character is a human male, we can write the story around this character. We want to have this character feel real and have realistic relationships with others. It is hard to set up a believable romantic situation if we don't know what the sex of the character is.

Corey: We also have to constantly make tough decisions as to whether a given piece of animation really adds to the game or if we can replace it with text. Text is much cheaper. We also need to consider the range of computers Sierra supports. One of the reasons we went from the "close-up" combat of *So You Want To Be A Hero* to the smaller views in *Trial By Fire* was to make the action more responsive on slower machines. We also saved a lot of disk space this way. In game three, however, we will go back to the more involving close-up views and we will have VGA 256-color graphics to add realism. Hopefully, none of our players will be on 8088s by 1992! We are looking forward with both joy and trepidation to the upcoming "CD-ROM era." Many of our restrictions will be loosened by the CD-ROM, but only for players who have them. We will actually have to do twice as much work to create games that make the best use of whatever hardware the player actually has.

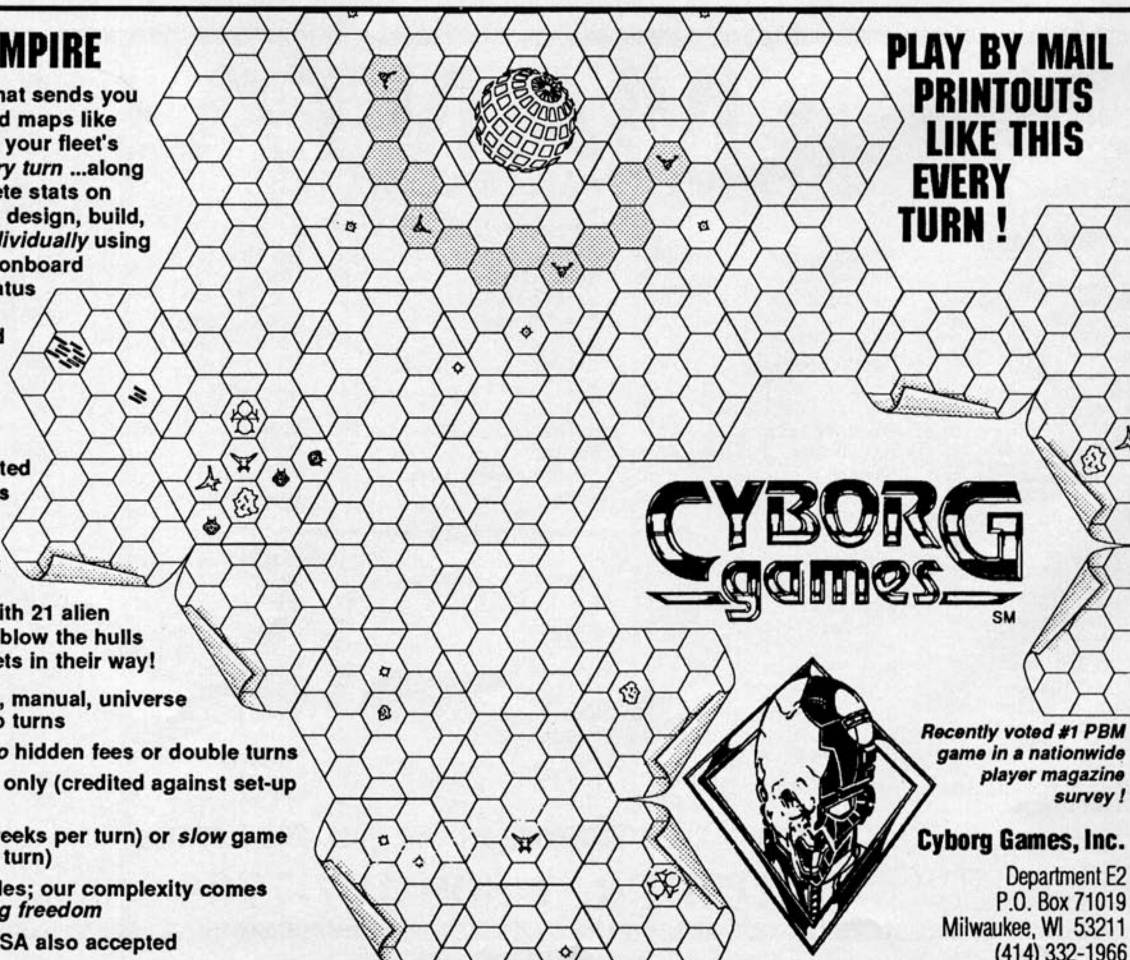
We're trying to make each game a little better, and a little more fun, than its predecessors. If we can get the player to believe, even for a few minutes at a time, that he/she is in the role of a real character, with real problems in a real world, and is interacting with other real people, then we've succeeded in most of our goal. If, on top of that, the player has a lot of fun in the process, we all win. **CGW**

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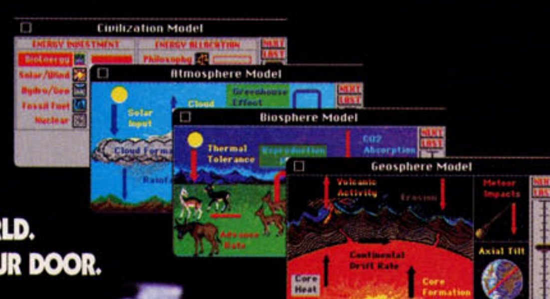
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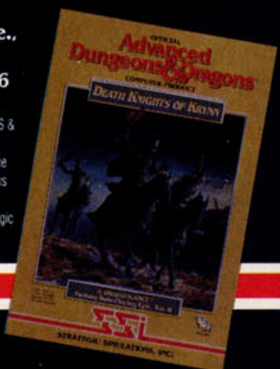
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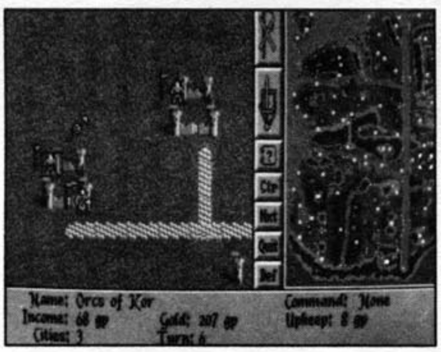
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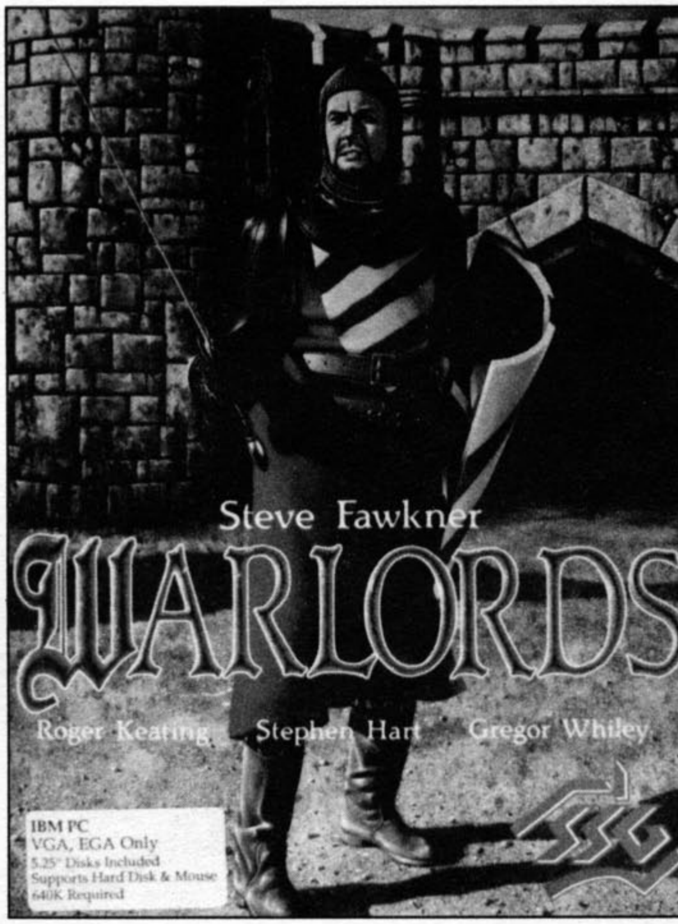
The fantasy/strategy genre has had no shortage of games with legitimate claim to the throne as "King of Fantasy/Strategy Games." In the boardgame world, **Fantasy Games, Unlimited's** *Lords & Wizards*, **Avalon Hill's** *Titan* and **TSR, Inc.'s** *Divine Right* are but three of the finest to vie for the crown. In the computer game world, **Avalon Hill's** early *Parthian Kings* and more recent *Darkhorn*, **PSS'** *Sorcerer Lord*, **SSI's** early *The Shattered Alliance* and more recent *Sword of Aragon* and *War of the Lance*, along with **Virgin Mastertronic's** *War in Middle Earth* have gained loyal factions that pledge their fealty to one or another of these games.

Now, however, some of these games may well find themselves in exile on many a gamer's shelf. **SSG's** latest offering, *Warlords*, not only succeeds as a "pure" strategy game, but also blends the elements of fantasy into the campaign so smoothly that they add to, rather than detract from, the strategic nature of the game.

TITLE:	Warlords
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$50.00
DESIGNER:	Steve Fawkner
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Studies Group Walnut Creek, CA 94598 (415) 932-3019

The game is set in the land of Illuria, where the peace has been broken and eight empires fight to control the eighty castles (cities) of the land. (The game ends when 41 are controlled by a single player, at which point the remaining rulers grovel for mercy.) The map is the same each game (there are no terrain or unit design kits in *Warlords*, unlike **SSG's** other wargames where their Warplan and Warpaint features are legend), but there are so many different opening moves and strategies available to each of the eight players that diversity is no problem during play.





A Magic Mixture (Hold the Magic, Please)

Perhaps, *Warlords* most resembles a hybrid between **Interstel's** *Empire* and **SSG's** own *Reach for the Stars*. The former is invoked because of that sense of exploration and discovery combined with quick, efficient battles and the latter is suggested because of the similarity to be found when both games present a multi-player struggle against competent, nay, *belligerent* computer opponents, forcing the player to fight the good fight against long and grueling odds.

With Enemies Like These, Who Needs Humans?

This is, perhaps, the *real* beauty of *Warlords*. The game is always played as an eight-sided contest. Although it is possible for up to eight humans to play (at the same computer), the artificial opponents provided in *Warlords* guarantee that one always has competent, ofttimes ruthless, opponents. Unlike computer strategy games where the computer's advantage lies mainly in "cheats" (such as more money, faster production, etc.), *Warlords* uses an evolved version of **SSG's** already superior AI routines and, this time, has really succeeded in creating opponents who seem to *think* like human competitors (shudder)! There are no "cheats" for computer players and the lower AI ratings (there are four for each computer-controlled player: Knight, Baron, Lord and Warlord) actually *handicap* the computer players by allowing them to make increasing numbers of human-like "dumb moves."

Waging Cruel War

The computer players wage a vicious style of warfare to eliminate opposition. There is a mean logic to what makes a computer player hate another player (human *or* computer; note that human players are not "artificially hated" more by computer players, either). The computer opponents react to other opponents on a scale which goes from apathy through distrust, dislike, disdain, disgust and hatred, all the way up to loathing. This antipathy factor increases whenever players capture a computer player's "rightful" castles (any castle previously occupied by that computer player during the course of a game) or whenever one player seems to be taking a lead in the game. Should a computer player reach a level of loathing toward an opponent and follow this by a "declaration of war," one can expect him to prosecute an unrelenting struggle against that player until, and unless, a truce is formed. Truces, by the way, are only formed

City Income and Notes

Name	Income/ Defense	Units Produced	Notes
Ak-Enlie	20/4	H, A	Human Archers
Ak-Farzon	20/4	H, A	Human Archers
Ak-Giriel	20/4	H, A, P	Human Archers
Alfar's Gap	18/4	L, C	Weak Cavalry
Amenal	16/4	L	*Island city*
Angbar	20/4	L, C	Weak Cavalry
Argenthorn	22/4	H, A, P	
Argrond	17/4	H, L	Strong, slow Heavy Infantry
Ar-Arak	26/5	L, H, C	
Balad Naran	29/6	L, N, W, N	Fast producing, strong, fast Wolves
Bane Citadel	30/6	L, Gi, W, C	Lord Bane's Capital
Barthel	21/5	L, H	
Bereri	36/6	H, L, C, N	Slow producing Cavalry; *Island city*
Carmel	20/5	L	Slow producing, strong, fast Light Infantry
Charling	16/3	L	
Citadel of Fire	24/5	L, H, N	
Citadel of Ice	26/5	L, H, N	
Cragmorton	23/4	D, G	Slow producing Griffins
Darclan	19/4	L, W	
Deephallow	23/4	L	
Derridon	20/4	L, C	Slow producing, slow Light Infantry
Deserton	20/4	L, N	
Dethal	20/4	L, W	Slow producing Wolves
Dhar-Khosis	30/6	H, D, Gr	
Duinoth	19/4	L, C	
Dunethal	27/6	L, C	Fast producing, inexpensive, fast Cavalry; Horse Lords' Capital
Elvallie	33/6	H, A, P	Fast Heavy Infantry; Fast producing Pegasi; Elvallie's Capital
Enmouth	35/6	L, H, C, N	Fast Cavalry; fast producing, strong Navies; Selentines' Capital
Fleymark	20/4	L, C	Fast producing, inexpensive, fast Cavalry
Galin	20/4	L, C, N	Slow producing, expensive Cavalry
Garom	20/4	L, W	
Gildenhome	24/5	H, A, P	
Gimlad	20/4	L, W	
Gluk	17/4	L, Gi, W	Fast producing Giants
Greenweigh	20/4	L, H, D	Slow producing Dwarves
Gorag	19/4	L, H	
Gork	15/4	L, Gi, W	Slow producing, weak, slow Giants
Gunthang	25/5	A, H, P	Fast producing Pegasi; Human Archers
Hereuth	26/6	L, H, N	Slow producing Navies
Herzag	23/4	L, W, N	Slow producing, slow Navies
Himelton	14/3	L, C	Slow producing, weak Cavalry
Hithos	28/6	H, L, C, N	Fast producing, fast Navies
Ilnyr	21/4	L, H, N	
Jessarton	19/4	L, N	Slow producing, weak Light Infantry
Kazrack	21/4	L, H, N	
Khorfe	26/5	H, A, P	Slow producing Griffins
Khamar	37/6	D, Gr	Strong, fast Griffins; Dwarves' Capital
Kor	30/6	H, Gi, W	Slow producing, expensive Giants; Orcs of Kor's Capital
Lador	16/4	L	
Loremark	21/4	H, A, P	
Marton	20/4	L, H, N	Weak Heavy Infantry
Malikor	16/4	L, H, C	Slow producing, slow Cavalry
Maridun	18/4	L, C	Slow producing Light Infantry; Fast producing, fast Cavalry
Marthos	32/6	L, H, C, P	Strong, slow Pegasi; Sirians' Capital
Minbourne	25/4	L, N	Weak Navies
Meneloth	25/5	L, H, C	Weak, slow Cavalry
Needleton	24/4	L	
Ohmsmouth	24/5	H, N	Fast producing, inexpensive Navies
Pa-Kur	25/5	L, H, C	
Pareth	22/5	L, H, C	Weak, slow Cavalry
Paynor	18/3	L	Slow producing Light Infantry
Quisce	21/4	L, N	
Ssuri	19/4	L, C	Weak Cavalry
Stormheim	20/6	Gi	Fast producing, fast Giants; Storm Giants' Capital
Tal	16/4	L, N	
Tasme	19/4	L, N	
Tirfing	23/4	L	Slow producing, strong, slow moving Light Infantry
Thurtz	18/4	L, W	
Troy	13/3	L, C	Slow Cavalry
Ubar	20/4	L, N	
Ungor	20/4	L, H	
Upbourne	17/4	H, N	
Upway	13/3	L	Slow producing Light Infantry
Varde	23/4	L, C, N	Weak Cavalry
Vernon	24/5	L, H, N	Slow producing, slow Heavy Infantry; strong Navies
Vival	12/3	L	*Island city*
Waybourne	22/4	H, N	
Wellmore	20/4	H, N	
Zaigonne	20/4	L, N	
Zhoran	25/5	D, Gr	Fast producing Dwarves

Unit Types: A = Archers, C = Cavalry, D = Dwarves, Gi = Giants, Gr = Griffins, H = Heavy Infantry, L = Light Infantry, N = Navies, P = Pegasi, W = Wolves.

Initial Assets Table

Empire Name	Player Color	Initial Funds	Capital's Income	Fortification Level (Initial)
Dwarves	Orange	137	37	6
Elvallie	Green	58	33	6
Horse Lords	Light Blue	77	27	6
Lord Bane	Black on Red	80	30	6
Orcs of Kor	Red	56	30	6
Selentines	Dark Blue	85	35	6
Sirians	White	432	32	6
Storm Giants	Yellow	45	20	6

City Income Averages

Average Income (excluding capitals)	20.8gp
Average Income (including capitals)	21.8gp

City Starting Fortification Levels by Income

City Income	Fortification Level
12-14	3
15-19	4
20-21	4-5
22-26	5
27+	6

Unit Averages Table

Unit Type	Time	Cost	Strength	Movement
Light Infantry	1	4	3	10
Heavy Infantry	2	4	5	08
Archers	1/3*	4	4	12
Dwarves	2	4	5	09
Giants	4	4	6	10
Wolves	3	8	5	14
Cavalry	4-5	8	6	16
Pegasi	7	16	4	16
Griffins	5-6	16	5	16
Navy	11	20	5	18
Undead**	-	0	7	12
Demons	-	0	7	14
Devils	-	0	8	12
Dragons	-	0	8	18
Wizards	-	0	6	50
Heroes	-	0	5	12

** = One turn to produce Elvin archers, three turns for Human archers.*

*** = Undead are also known as "Ghosts."*

as a matter of convenience with one player when a far *greater* hatred is built up for another player!

Of course, one does not even have to do *anything* in particular to gain the wrath of some computer opponents. This level of unpredictability means some might still decide to loathe you and declare war, simply on a whim, even when they're on the other side of the map. About the worst thing one can see is the "Hate Menu" reading "Loathing" from top to bottom, with all the other players bearing swords of the player's own color (meaning they have declared war on that player).

The computer players are fine strategists, too. While they'll never be as sharp as humans, they know to attack a player where he is weakest, how to set defensive priorities and hold important cities and how best to penetrate deep into the heart of a player's empire. Those devils will even raze a player's castles to the ground in a form of brutal economic warfare, knowing that they cannot hold out against a prepared counterattack!

"Those Aren't *Bombers*. They're *Dragons*!"

Warlords has many of the trimmings of a fantasy game, although it is much more a strategy game. (The fantasy trimmings appear to be added to this game for either spice, to loosen the confines of modeling reality or to provide a marketing gimmick — probably all three.) As in *Sword of Aragon*, certain types of fantasy troops are better situated for their "natural" terrain (elves in the forests, dwarves in the hills, etc.). Since griffons, pegasi and dragons move through the air (along with any heroes in their stack), literal "flying columns" can be sent over the most tortuous terrain for deep raids or surprise attacks. The various unit types are given in the supplemental charts and tables in this article. From the *Warlords* Unit Averages Table, one can see how units are rated, on average, for the time they take to produce, the cost to produce them, their strength and speed on the board.

A special note to wargamers: units' "movement allowances" might actually go *up* a bit if the unit did not spend its entire movement allowance on the previous turn. This is an interesting feature which makes slogging through slow terrain a bit more bearable.

Heroes to Go

Heroes are crucial to a player's chance to succeed. Each player has an initial allotment of one and additional heroes can only be acquired when a player manages to amass the fortune required to entice them. Heroes are not particularly strong (with a strength of five on a one-to-nine scale), but are the only units which can explore the various ruins, oracles and libraries of the land. These sites offer knowledge, items of power (which only heroes can wield), gold and special units with which to enhance a player's position. Of course, there *is* risk. Many of these sites are guarded, and there is a fair chance that a hero will be gloriously impaled as "Purringa Monster Bait" very early in his exploratory career (although there are no direct penalties for "monster baiting").

Venturing into the unknown is not the only quest for a competent hero. They also lead armies, adding to the strength of all the units they lead (depending on their personal strength and the value of any items of leadership which they might possess).

Note that there is a *de facto* "ceiling" of five heroes for any single player (although players who amass a tremendous number of cities can occasionally add extras). It is desirable to hire every hero possible, because they tend to arrive with special units (undead, dragons, etc.) in tow as "allies." These special units are vital to forming effective legions, as described in the next section.

Combat Made Simple

The combat system is very simple. Basically, units in battle line up against each other, with the first unit on each side's line fighting a one-on-one battle (heroes are last in line). The battle is resolved by each opposing unit rolling a 10-sided die versus the opposing unit's combat strength. If one unit rolls higher than an opposing unit's strength, while that opposing unit rolls lower than the first unit's strength, the low rolling unit takes a hit (if both sides roll high or low there is a re-roll). After two hits, a unit is dead and *all* battles are a fight to the finish (there is no retreat).

Terrain, castle walls (for the defender), the presence of a hero, a hero's command items, having a flying troop in the stack, having a special unit in the stack (dragons are ideal in battle because all units stacked with them get a +2 to their strength; +1 for a flying unit and +1 for a special unit) and previous blessings from the various temples on the board can all modify a unit's combat strength. No unit can be modified above a strength of nine (thus, are always vulnerable). Thus it is theoretically possible for the weakest unit to smite the strongest unit (the maxim about "the fight not always being to the strongest, but that's the way to bet" comes to mind), but quality matters more than quantity (usually, one high-strength unit can hold off many, many weaker ones). Thus, players will be well served to make up stacks (up to eight units per stack) of A-Team troops (i.e., a mix of units whose modified strengths are all raised up to eight or nine for maximum effectiveness). Often, several of these elite stacks will die storming important castle walls, but cities are the name of the game.

Buckets Full of Ducats

Ah, money. The economics of *Warlords* is really quite simple. Every unit costs a certain amount to produce, paid in full when the unit *begins* production (no C.O.D. units). Each turn a unit is on the map, half of its production cost is deducted from the treasury for "maintenance." Thus, players experience a military capacity tied strictly to their economic infrastructure (no communist economies allowed). Fortunately(?), casualties usually keep players from hitting their heads against this military build-up/economic ceiling, so one seldom has to worry about paring down military production.

Other uses for money include raising fortification levels of cities and hiring heroes. Usually, important production cities (like a player's capital) need to be well-fortified and garrisoned, as should front-line cities (to discourage cheap, easy raids).

Hiring heroes is another matter. One can be sitting on a mountain of gold and still not see a hero emerge for several excruciating turns. Like fortification levels, the more heroes you have, the more expensive it is to hire the next one (somewhat like professional athletes in the present day). In the case of heroes, however, their acquisition is the usual source for players to acquire vital "special" units which are both powerful in combat *and* add to the strengths of all the units they are stacked with.

A final note about money. This is where the computer players have their big advantage. While they cannot manage every nuance of movement and combat across the vast terrain of Illuria, they "know" how to manage money. They ruthlessly squeeze every garrison down to a calculated minimum and only maintain forces which they plan to use (unlike humans). There is little inefficiency in a computer player's pursestring management, so it is often the case that computer players will have more money (and what money buys) than will human players.

Remember, Thou Art Mortal

This reviewer encountered sound problems on three different computers (with three different sound systems). This is only a trifling problem, though, since the sound effects are not important to the game. There is also a bad toggle on one of the menus which always reads "observe off," even when this is "on." When activated, "observe on" makes it possible for players to observe all the movement and battles of the computer players as they happen. Also, an unmapped ruin, the Druid's Temple, was discovered in the north-west corner of the board (it is not a place of healing, however).

These minor quibbles aside, *Warlords* has everything to offer the strategy gamer who has a taste for a bit of the fantasy genre. Basically, players who hated themselves for all the time spent enjoying *Empire* or *Reach for the Stars* are in for some *serious* guilty pleasures with *Warlords*! **cgw**



Over There

From Construction to Destruction

by Paul Rigby

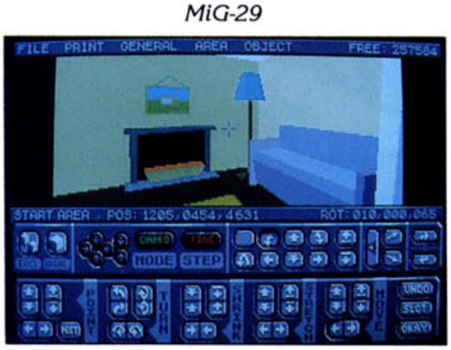


MiG-29



Diane Sipe

A MiG-29 Fulcrum taking off at the 1990 Farnborough Air Show



3-D Construction Kit

Many of our readers will be familiar with the solid 3-D games produced, over here, by **Incentive**. *Driller*, *Castle Master* and so on introduced leisurely 3-D adventuring with the emphasis on puzzle-solving and maze exploration. Now **Incentive**, via **Domark** in the UK, are to release a *3-D Construction Kit* (*3DCK*) based on the same 3-D system that will enable anybody to create their own run-time, royalty-free game with the previous games' features plus animation, a shoot-'em-up capability, etc. Available for the PC, Amiga and ST, the *3DCK* allows the user to create, edit and manipulate 3-D solid polygonal shapes via a user-friendly control panel.

Triangles, cubes, hexagons and pentagons can be generated and combined to form more complex or irregular shapes, each having their own position and status in the user's 3-D environment. Above the neat control panel is a window onto the world you are building. You can move about this world during the editing process, either examining what you have done or adding/editing other objects. Although you are limited to regular polygons you can, in fact, combine picture elements and use transparent options to create some very complex game elements.

The *3DCK* is very memory-efficient, with objects taking only a few bytes and even a complex world (a house complete with rooms and furniture, for example) could be squeezed into a mere 10K of memory. Image files can be imported to enhance to the screens, *Deluxe Paint* and *Neochrome* being two examples. Dynamic displays, such as score tables and energy graphs, can also be included. On the sound front, *3DCK* can import sampled sounds that can be added to the Kit's default sound library. Sounds can be assigned to objects so that, for example, shooting an object would result in an explosion sound being generated as well as, if you wish, trigger an animation explosion effect. The *3DCK* is to be released in April for £49.99 (PC and Amiga), £39.99 for the ST and £24.99 for the C-64 (cassette or disk).

Activision's *Hunter* is a sixteen-color solid 3-D game set in a fractal-generated landscape. Playing from a second-person viewpoint, the player takes full control of the main character movement and decision making. The story? A small group of strategically important islands have been occupied by a superior enemy force. You are a soldier, highly trained in undercover intelligence and sabotage warfare. Your purpose is to carry out a num-

ber of dangerous missions to clear the way for your army to ultimately defeat the enemy and liberate the islands. Missions involve a large amount of solitary work behind enemy lines with only your ingenuity, what you have in your kit-bag and a variety of vehicles and aircraft to aid you.

Each mission begins with a comprehensive briefing which will furnish the player with information regarding the location of enemy positions, artillery and movements. You will also be told the objective of your mission and the time in which it must be completed, ranging from a few hours to several days and nights (five real minutes equals one game hour). Available for £24.95 for the Amiga and ST around March of this year.

It had to happen... The first flight simulation based upon the aircraft that flew the spirit of *glasnost* to the Farnborough Air Show in England — the *MiG-29 Fulcrum* — has arrived from UK software house **Domark**. *MiG-29* has, apparently, been under development for two years with assistance from the likes of British Aerospace and playtesting from John Farley — the only European pilot to test-fly the Fulcrum.

There are six missions in the game, the first being a training scenario, the last simply called Final. As the player progresses through the missions, each aspect of the aircraft and its capabilities will be introduced to you via air-to-air, air-to-ground missions and so on. Waypoints are also included during the mission. All of the usual 3-D terrain and internal/external viewpoints are available.

Though on first impression the cockpit looks unconvincing and simplistic, the flight model is reported to be complex, at least on the PC version. Apparently the Amiga and ST versions will use a simplified model (available as an option on the PC). Available now on the PC for £29.99.

Pick 'n' Pile is the name, piling and picking is the game from French software house **Ubisoft**. Three different colored balls drop from the skies and the aim is to stack them into similarly hued piles. Everything on-screen can be picked with a mouse click and moved into a pile with a second click. Once they are neatly stacked, the balls will disappear, as long as the pile touches the floor and there is nothing blocking the top. Each screen has a set number of balls, blocks and various other bits that drop. You must clear the screen of spheres before the time runs out. Available now on Amiga and ST (£19.99) with a possible PC conversion in the future.

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Tel: 011-44-51-263-6306

Miles Better Software, 219/221 Cannock Road, Chadsmoor, Cannock, Staffordshire, England, WS11 2DD Tel: 011-44-543-466-577/8/80; Fax: 01144-543-466-579

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins Sq., Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Tel: 011-44-268-590-766; Fax: 011-44-268-590-076

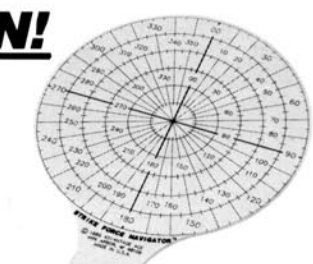
All of the above telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have any trouble, contact the international operator. CGW

Conversions Received



Wayne Gretzky Hockey (Bethesda Softworks) Amiga
The Bard's Tale III: Thief of Fate (EA) IBM
Battle Squadron (EA) Sega Genesis
Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer 2.0 (EA) Atari ST
The Immortal (EA) Nintendo
John Madden Football (EA) Sega Genesis
Lakers vs. Celtics (EA) Sega Genesis
Skate or Die 2 (EA) Nintendo
Sword of Sodan (EA) Sega Genesis
D.R.A.G.O.N. Force (Interstel) IBM
Night Shift (Lucasfilm) Amiga
Golden Axe (Sega) Amiga
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Ultra) C-64/128

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Circle Reader Service #14

Taking a Peek

(Continued frompage 6)

Konami
900 Deerfield Parkway
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-4510

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II: Arcade action and logic puzzles punctuate this movie-based computer game (all that's missing is the smell of popcorn and the loss of quarters). Time to help Marty and Jennifer's kids in the year 2015 while avoiding Biff's bullies (just don't slip off the hoverboard!). While not history-making, the loyal movie tie-in gives this game a "future." Amiga ($39.95), C-64 ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

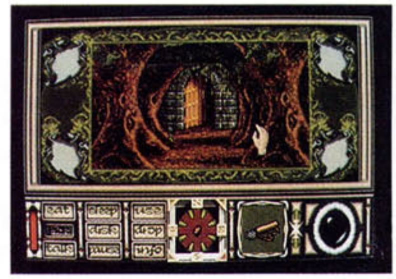
BILL ELLIOTT'S NASCAR CHALLENGE: Drive into another auto race/driving simulator, this time with a twist (and turn). *Nascar Challenge* allows the player to pick from among three different stock cars, race on eight different courses and, most importantly, *actually fine-tune* the car's design. Modifying the engine setup, spoiler angle, gear ratios or tire stagger could make the difference between the winning edge or winding up parked "out of the circle" on a given track. Racing seasons, maintenance in the pits and camera replays of crashes (where one can observe the crash from any car involved in the accident) round out the package. Fasten your seat belts (and keep your fire extinguisher handy). IBM ($49.95). Circle Service #5.

Ocean Software
c/o Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA

LOST PATROL: This British import combines an effective graphic presentation with the first-person perspective of the vagaries of guerilla warfare (although South African forces are pictured on the cover, this is a Vietnam game). Unfortunately, both the clumsy keyboard interface and lack of mouse support recreate the helplessness our military must have felt (in a quite unintentional manner). Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.



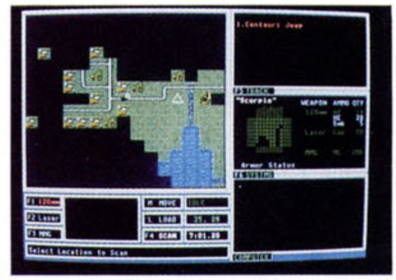
Lost Patrol



Zeliard



Obitus



Fireteam 2200

Psygnosis
Brookline, MA

OBITUS: Part fantasy adventure, part arcade game, this Psygnosis title delivers everything those bouncy Brits are famous for (great graphics and challenging play). With its amazingly brief documentation, players quickly find themselves working their way through smooth-scrolling mazes and manipulating objects through a point-and-click icon-driven interface while attempting to escape a maze-riddled alien world of fantasy and magic. Amiga. Circle Service #7.

Sierra
Coarsegold, CA

ZELIARD: Like *Obitus*, this foreign import offers action/adventure with plenty of emphasis on arcade sequences. Arriving from Japan via Sierra, *Zeliard* has a more Japanese flavor than a British one (i.e., the characters which maneuver around the screen are smaller and the arcade sequences are more frequent and fast-paced). Although it is much like the "quarter pumpers" one finds in arcades, *Zeliard* adds many more storyline elements for PC campaigns than these. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

SimSystems
1311 Castro Street
San Francisco, CA 94114-3620

FIRETEAM 2200: This futuristic wargame offers rich tactical combat details that will really tickle "hardware buffs." Command a single unit or a team of up to sixteen vehicles and fireteams to achieve military objectives. Multiple combat unit types and weapons systems over detailed tactical maps give a good "feel of battle." Suitable for two-player action via modem play or direct cable, the small icons are a bit of a challenge to play with, but can be overcome. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Software Toolworks
Novato, CA

LIFE & DEATH II, THE BRAIN: The IBM goes pre-med. While not entirely serious, this game is more of a "hospital simulator" than you might expect. VGA graphics show medical scans, x-rays, and other diagnostic information. On-line "med school" information makes operating this game a cut above (hey, suture 'self). Listen to the digitized voices (which, fortunately, won't get you lost going down endless white corridors) and don't say "oops" in surgery (remember, a mind is a terrible thing to waste). Apparently, the only thing not included in the box is a white coat. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #10. **cgw**

On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 4, please rate the following games (only if you have played them!) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A = Excellent
B = Above Average
C = Average
D = Below Average
F = Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in descending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

4. Are you currently a subscriber to *Computer Gaming World*? (Y/N)

Games

5. Zetiard (Sierra)
6. Silent Service II (Microprose)
7. Savage Empire (Origin)
8. Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge (Konami)
9. Lightspeed (Microprose)
10. Wings (Cinemaware)
11. Air Strike USA (Spotlight)
12. MechWarrior (Activision)
13. The Lord of the Rings (Interplay)
14. Ultima V (Origin)
15. Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)
16. Hero's Quest (Sierra)
17. Red Baron (Dynamix)
18. UMS 2 (MicroPlay)
19. Back to the Future II (Konami)
20. Fleet Med (Simulations Canada)
21. A-10 Tank Killer (Dynamix)
22. Thunderstrike (Live Studios)
23. Das Boot (Three Sixty Pacific)
24. Bard's Tale III (Electronic Arts)
25. PowerMonger (Electronic Arts)
26. Lords of the Rising Sun (Koei)
27. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
28. Second Front (Strategic Studies, Inc.)
29. Nobunaga's Ambition (Koei)
30. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
31. Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
32. SimCity (Maxis)
33. Ultima VI (Origin)
34. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
35. M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)
36. Warlords (Strategic Studies Group)
37. Secret of Monkey Island (Lucasfilm)
38. Wing Commander (Origin)

Articles

39. Taking A Peek
40. Scorpion's Mail
41. Red Baron Review
42. Rumor Bag
43. Opponents Wanted
44. PowerMonger Review
45. James Bond: The Stealth Affair Review
46. The Lord of the Rings Review
47. Scorpion's View
48. Warlords Review/Notes
49. Games Rating Chart
50. Consumer Electronic Show Report, Part II
51. MegaFortress Preview
52. Test Drive III Review
53. Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)
54. Thunderstrike (Live Studios)
55. Computer Art Portfolio
56. Lori & Corey's Quest For Glory (Designer's Notes)
57. Additional Notes for Command HQ
58. Over There
59. Editorial
60. This issue *overall*

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Safe Software

Is Copy Protection Necessary?

State of the Industry: In order to answer the question in the subtitle effectively, one must conjure names of successful games from the past, like *M.U.L.E.* and *Empire*. Everyone has *played* them, but how many people actually *own* them? Both are considered by most consumers to be classic hits, but both had sales figures that fell far short of expectations. Across *all* formats combined, *Empire* has failed to surpass the 100,000 mark. *M.U.L.E.*, available on fewer formats, has only sold around 30,000 units. If ever figures could underline a problem, these should.

Mark Baldwin, designer of the personal computer version of *Empire*, believes that the reason comparatively few copies sold was because the "look-up" protection was so simple to break. Dan Bunten believes the reason so many copies of *M.U.L.E.* were pirated was a combination of the fact that the on-disk copy protection was antiquated enough that virtually anyone who wanted to could break it, and many retailers were not convinced enough that it was going to sell (thus, they pulled it quicker than they did his 150,000 unit seller, *Seven Cities of Gold*), so *M.U.L.E.* ended up going "back channel."

Early copies of *Computer Gaming World* bear out Bunten's theory of piracy because the numbers of responses from gamers rating the 30,000-selling *M.U.L.E.* and 150,000-selling *Seven Cities of Gold* were nearly identical. Bunten argues that, in one sense, *M.U.L.E.*'s success killed it. It received great "word of mouth," but as Bunten notes, "At that time, word of mouth was 'Have a copy.'"

Piracy is *still* a hydra that raises its many heads in numerous forms. *Ultima V* had not been on the streets a full week before the first pirate version showed up on the specialized pirate bulletin boards. Over the past two and one-half years, the **Software Publishers Association**'s (SPA) Anti-Piracy Program has initiated more than sixty lawsuits against corporations, training schools, mail-order operations and bulletin boards. The SPA even has a toll-free hotline (1-800-388-PIR8) for individuals to report flagrant violators.

Yet, *CGW* continues to hear from gamers who wish the companies would *do something* about copy protection. They question the necessity of the protection (citing the fact that any protection scheme can be broken) and insist that the honest gamer is the one who is being penalized. At *CGW*, we still believe that copy protection (like locking your car or house) is a way of keeping honest people honest. We are not unsympathetic to those who get annoyed with copy protection. We have done more than our fair share of grumbling as we pulled out our microscopes to look up that number on non-reproducible paper; discovered that the picture on the screen did not *really* match any picture in the manual; flipped madly through pages to find the right shape or picture portrayed in the margin; miscounted words in the "seventh word in line ten of the third paragraph" type of documentation check; and had the game call us thieves when we typed in the wrong information.

Nevertheless, we believe that copy protection serves a purpose. It may have minimal effectiveness, but it serves to remind us that piracy is stealing the fruits of someone else's labors. If, then, we wondered, copy protection is a necessary evil, which type of copy protection is least offensive?

State of the Magazine: In *CGW* #79, we asked our readers to identify the type or types of copy protection that they found *least* objectionable. Almost 70% of our readers said that they found "documentation checks" to be least objectionable. Several readers noted in the margin on the "Reader Input Device" card that they preferred games where looking up the answer in the documentation was part of the game's fiction. 20% of our readers believe that code wheel protection is least offensive, almost 10% of our readers are willing to use "key disk" protected programs (although we hear from many who absolutely refuse to purchase any products with "key disk" protection) and only 4% are willing to put up with looking up material on non-reproducible paper.

It is to be hoped that software publishers will listen to their customers. If so, we can expect to see massive stocks of non-reproducible paper auctioned off at bargain basement prices and more creative effort spent in making even the documentation checks part of the game. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

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Computer Gaming World (ISSN 0744-6667) is published monthly by **Golden Empire Publications, Inc.**, 130 Chaparral Ct. Suite 260, Anaheim Hills, CA 92808. Second-Class Postage paid at Anaheim, CA 92803 and additional mailing offices. Permit #672-910

Contents are copyrighted by Golden Empire Publications, 1990.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Computer Gaming World*, P.O. Box 730, Yorba Linda, CA 92686-8629.
The subscription rate for twelve issues (one year) is $24.00. Canadian and foreign surface subscriptions add $11.00. Foreign air subscriptions are $74.00 per year. All payments must be in U.S. dollars, made by check drawn upon a U.S. bank, Visa, MasterCard, or money order.

Psalms 9:1-2

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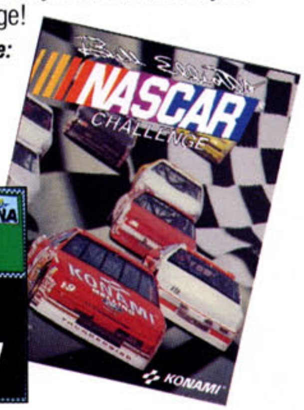
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